

COMMENTARY
UPON
THE HOLY BIBLE,
FROM
HENRY AND SCOTT;
WITH OCCASIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES FROM OTHER WRITERS,
JOB TO SOLOMON'S SONG.

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GENERAL REMARKS

ON

THE POETICAL BOOKS.

THE division of the holy scriptures, usually called the poetical books, comprises five in number, namely, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, or the Song of Solomon. In point of date, much of them is earlier than many of the historical books; but they are classed by themselves, being almost wholly composed in Hebrew verse. In the Jewish canon of scripture they are called Hagiographa, or holy writings.

We here meet with argumentative and doctrinal divinity, devotional exercises, the language of religious experience, and maxims of practical wisdom, interspersed with prophecies of the Redeemer, and typical references to him. The language is highly elevated, figurative, and indeed richly poetical. They are written in verse, although the laws of the metres are now unknown; and they have all the splendour and sublimity, the softness and the beauty of the oriental uninspired and heathen writers, without their exaggerations and licentiousness.

The peculiar excellence of the Hebrew poetry appears, when we consider that its origin and earliest application are clearly to be traced to the service of religion. To celebrate the praises of Jehovah in hymns and songs, to decorate the worship of the Most High with all the charms and graces of harmony, to give force and energy to the devout affections, was the sublime employment of their poets, and contributed not a little to the peculiar character of their poetry. In the Old Testament we have proof that music and poetry were cultivated from the earliest ages among the Hebrews. But in the reign of David they were carried to the greatest perfection.

The principal, and indeed the only characteristic of Hebrew poetry which can now be traced, is *parallelism*, or such an arrangement of parts of a sentence that things shall answer to things, and words to words, as if fitted by a kind of rule or measure. Such is the general strain of the Hebrew poetry, instances of which are found in almost every part of the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalms and Proverbs. This explains why the English version, though in prose, retains in many parts so much of a poetical cast. For, being almost word for word after the original, the form and order of the sentences are preserved, and we plainly perceive a departure from the common style of prose.

This subject has been very fully examined by *Lowth* and *Jebb*, and a general view of it is given by *T. H. Horne*, from whom many of the preceding and following remarks are taken. In this place only a brief outline can be stated. The poetical parallelism has been found to be reducible to the following species. (1.) *Parallel lines gradational*: see Ps. 1. 1; 21. 1, 2; 24. 3, 4. (2.) *Antithetic*: see Ps. 20. 7, 8; 30. 5; 37. 10, 11; Prov. 10. 1, 7; 11. 24; 16. 33; 29. 26. *Constructive*; (3.) Ps. 19. 7—17; 148. 7—13; Job 12. 13—16. Each of the above species admits of many combinations. (4.)

Parallel lines *introduced*: Prov. 23. 15, 16; Ps. 135. 18. The latter passage may be given as an illustrative example:

1. The idols of the heathen are silver and gold;
2. The work of men's hand;
3. They have mouths, but they speak not;
4. They have eyes, but they see not;
5. They have ears, but they hear not;
6. Neither is there any breath in their mouths.
7. They who make them are like unto them;
8. So are all they who put their trust in them.

The reader will perceive the manner in which lines 1 and 8, 2 and 7, 3 and 6, 4 and 5, answer, or are parallel to each other.

As already remarked, the poetry of the Hebrews derives its chief excellence from being so entirely dedicated to religion. Nothing can be found more elevated, beautiful, and elegant than the compositions of the Hebrew bards. The Greek and Roman poets employed themselves on subjects often very trifling, or worse, and at best on subjects infinitely inferior. The Hebrew poet worshipped Jehovah as the Sovereign of his people, believed that all the laws he was bound to obey were of Divine enactment, was taught that man depended upon God for every thing, and he meditated on nothing but Jehovah—to him he devoutly referred all things, and placed his supreme delight in celebrating the Divine attributes and perfections.

It may be further remarked, that, when reading or interpreting Hebrew poetry, we should especially remember the manners of the people, and the idioms of the language. As the sacred poets lived in the east, their ideas and manners are different from ours, and are not to be considered according to our modes of thinking. Without attending to these circumstances, the Hebrew poetry cannot be correctly understood, nor its beauties duly felt and appreciated.

In reference to the books of holy writ, usually called the poetical books, we may observe, that all scripture is profitable, and this part of it in a special manner, for instruction in doctrine, in devotion, and in the right ordering of the conversation. These books have in them the very sum and substance of religion, and what they contain is more fitted to our hand, and made ready for use, than any part of the Old Testament; upon which account, if we may be allowed to compare one star with another, in the firmament of the scripture, these will be reckoned stars of the first magnitude. The book of Job directs us what we are to believe concerning God. The book of Psalms, how we are to worship Him, and maintain our communion with Him. The book of the Proverbs shows very particularly how we are to govern ourselves in every turn of human life. Ecclesiastes declares to us the vanity of all earthly pursuits and advantages, unless they have reference to the concerns of the soul. The Canticles present the believer with a delineation of his experience, of the joys which result from union with the Saviour, of sorrows which accompany the hidings of his Lord's countenance. Thus shall the man of God, by a due attendance to these lights, be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work.

The reader is referred to the prefaces of each book for particular remarks thereon.

of Uz, in the eastern part of Arabia. In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. He was the principal person in that country, and acted as a ruler. He had abundance of every thing that then and there constituted riches: when the earth was thinly inhabited it was easy to acquire land, so that Job's wealth is reckoned by the number of his cattle, not the extent of his land.

He was prosperous, and yet pious. Though it is hard and rare, it is not impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. With God, even this is possible; by his grace the temptations of worldly wealth may be overcome. He was pious, and his piety was a friend to his prosperity; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. He was prosperous, and his prosperity put a lustre upon his piety, and gave him greater opportunities of doing good. In the abundance of the good things God gave him, he served God the more cheerfully.

He had a numerous family. Children must be looked upon as blessings, for so they are, especially to good people, that give them good instructions, set them good examples, and put up good prayers for them. Job had many children, yet he did not oppress others, nor was uncharitable, ch. 31. 17. In a word, Job was the greatest of all the men of the east. The account of Job's piety and prosperity comes before the history of his great afflictions, showing that neither will secure us from the calamities of human life.

Job's sons were grown up and settled; they cheerfully enjoyed their abundance, and lived in brotherly love; we read nothing to their disadvantage. But while their pious father beheld their harmony and comforts with satisfaction, his knowledge of the human heart made him fearful lest they should be betrayed into some levity or excess. When their days of feasting were ended, as the priest of his family, he sent and sanctified them, reminding them to examine themselves, to confess their sins, to seek forgiveness with humble devotion; and as one who hoped for acceptance with God, through the promised Saviour, he offered a burnt-offering for each of them. Thus Job taught them that even the secret evils of the heart deserved condemnation, and could only be expiated by the shedding of blood, and the offering of sacrifice in repentance and

humble faith. As he did this continually, we may perceive his care for their souls, his knowledge of the sinful state of man, his entire dependence on God's mercy in the way that he had appointed, and his believing regard to the promised Redeemer.

When these sacrifices were to be offered he rose early, as one whose heart was on his work. He, probably, required his children to attend the sacrifice, that they might join with him in prayer, that the sight of the killing of the sacrifice might humble them for their sins, and the sight of the offering might lead them to a Mediator.

Ver. 6—12. *Satan obtains leave to try Job.*

The holy angels continuing in the state in which they were first created, love God, and are beloved of him as his children. They are here represented as presenting themselves before the Lord, to give an account of their services, and to receive further commands. Satan, the adversary of God, and of his whole creation, is represented as intruding amongst them. Without entering into particulars, we hence may learn that Job's extraordinary afflictions originated from the malice of Satan, by the Lord's permission, for wise and holy purposes. Many truths respecting the character and influence of the devil and his angels are here set forth. They continually intrude into the company of God's children on earth, especially when met in his ordinances, or before his mercy-seat, to distract their attention, and prevent their benefit and comfort. Wherever they are, they are instigated by malice, and are seeking to do mischief.

So much is clear—there is an evil spirit, the enemy of God, and of all righteousness, who is continually seeking to distress, to seduce, and, if possible, to destroy those who love God. He is their accuser and tempter; ever bringing against them false and malicious charges, insinuating that all their services proceed from selfish principles, and laying snares for them, that he may draw them aside from the path of duty. He is indeed under the restraint of an Almighty Power; but he is permitted to show his malignity. How far this influence may extend cannot be determined; but probably much of the unsteadiness and unhappiness of Christians may be ascribed to his agency.—(60.)

Observe the account Satan gives of himself. He had been diligently looking on every side, to retain his subjects in his

service; to urge them to more wickedness, and to seek for opportunities of persecuting and distressing those who professed to serve God. While we are on this earth we are within his reach, and, with so much subtilty, swiftness, and industry, does he penetrate into all the corners of it, that we cannot be in any place secure from his temptations. He walks about seeking whom he may devour. Thus it concerns us to be sober and vigilant, 1 Pet. 5. 8.

Observe how honourably God speaks of Job; He is my servant. Good men are God's servants; he is pleased to reckon himself honoured in their services; they are to him for a name and a praise, Jer. 13. 11, a crown of glory, Isa. 62. 3.

Also notice Satan's base insinuation against Job. He suggests that he was mercenary in his religion, and therefore a hypocrite. Observe how impatient the devil was of hearing Job praised. Those are like the devil, who grudge at the just share of reputation others have, as Saul, 1 Sam. 18. 5, &c., and the pharisees, Matt. 21. 15. He could not accuse him of any thing that was bad, and therefore charges him with by-ends in doing good. See how slyly he censures him. This is the common way of slanderers, to suggest, by way of query, that which they have no reason to think is true. It is not strange if those that are approved and accepted of God, be unjustly censured by the devil and his instruments. It is easy to charge them with hypocrisy, and they have no way to clear themselves, but patiently to wait for the judgment of God. As there is nothing we should dread more than being hypocrites, so there is nothing we need dread less than being called and counted so without cause. It was truth that Job did not fear God for naught; godliness is great gain: but it was a falsehood that he would not have feared God if he had not got this by it, as the event proved. It is not mercenary to look at the eternal recompense in our obedience; but to aim at temporal advantages in our religion, and to make it subservient to that, is idolatry, worshipping the creature more than the Creator, and is likely to end in fatal apostasy: men cannot long serve God and mammon.

Observe what God had done for Job. God's peculiar people are taken under his special protection; they, and all that belong to them. Divine grace makes a hedge about their spiritual life, and Di-

vine Providence about their natural life. He had prospered him, not in idleness or injustice, but in honest diligence; Thou hast blessed the work of his hands; without that blessing, be the hands ever so strong, ever so skilful, the work will not prosper. The blessing of the Lord makes rich; Satan himself owns it.

The Lord gave Satan permission to deprive Job of all those outward comforts and possessions, for the sake of which he was supposed to serve him. But he would not allow him to hurt his body, or even to assail his soul with those temptations which formed part of his after trials. This permission was granted that Job's integrity and the power of grace in him might be manifested, to Satan's confusion, the benefit of Job, the edification of the church in all ages, and the glory of God.

He suffered Job to be tried, as he suffered Peter to be sifted; but took care that his faith should not fail, Luke 22. 32; the trial of it was found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. 1. 7. It is matter of comfort that God has the devil in a chain, Rev. 20. 1. He could not afflict Job without leave from God, and no further than he had leave. It is a limited power that the devil has; he has no power to lead men to sin but what they give him themselves, nor any power to afflict men but what is given him from above.

All this is here described to us after the manner of men, according to a figure by which God expresses himself in his actions and dispensations to the world as if he were a man. We are not to conceive that God makes certain days of session with his creatures, that he needs to receive information, neither is he moved by the slanders of Satan. But the scripture speaks thus to teach us that God directs the affairs of the world. In these verses we have as it were a delineation of Divine Providence, such a representation as we read, 1 Kings 22. 19, by which we are instructed that God doth exactly order all things in heaven and earth.—(15.)

6. The absolute dependence of angelic beings, whether good or evil, on the will of God, in all their actions towards man, is clearly shown in the book of Job.—Fry. There is not a single text to be found in holy writ, which, rightly understood, gives the least countenance to the abominable doctrine of a participation of the holy angels in God's government of the world. The most that can be made of angels is, that they are servants, employed by the Most High God to do his errands for the elect.—Horsley.

Ver. 13—19. *The destruction and loss of Job's property, and the death of his children.*

Satan brought Job's troubles upon him on the day that his children began their course of feasting. All were easy, and under no apprehension when they revived this custom; and this time Satan chose, that the trouble might be the more grievous; Isa. 21. 4.

The troubles all came upon Job at once; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking, another followed immediately. Thus Satan, by the Divine permission, ordered it, 1. That there might appear a more than ordinary displeasure of God against him. 2. That he might not have leisure to recollect, and reason himself into a gracious submission, but might be overwhelmed by a complication of calamities. If he have not room to pause, he will be apt to speak in haste, and then, if ever, he will curse his God. The children of God are often in heaviness, through manifold temptations. Let one affliction help us to prepare for another; for how deep soever we have drunk of the bitter cup, as long as we are in this world we cannot be sure that it will pass from us. 3. All that he had was taken from him, and a full end of his enjoyments made.

The account Job has of a part of his losses, lets him know that it was not through any carelessness of his servants. All our prudence, care, and diligence cannot secure us from affliction; yet it is a comfort under trouble, if it found us in the way of our duty. When Satan has God's permission to do mischief, he will not want mischievous men to be instruments, for he is a spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

Another part of Job's losses was occasioned by fire from heaven, which seemed to imply that God was become his enemy. We cannot determine in what manner this and other effects were produced by Satan, but all is in the Lord's hands; this is our only security.

This fire being a strange and extraordinary fire, is said to be the fire of God. The Hebrews call extraordinary things the things of God. Heaven is put for the air, the middle region of the air, where Satan hath great power, Eph. 2. 2, and he can do mighty things.—(15.)

His dearest and most valuable possessions were his ten children; news is brought him that they are killed. This was the greatest of Job's losses. Our children

are pieces of ourselves; it is very hard to part with them. The loss of one child has often been more than a parent could support with resignation. But for them to be all cut off in a moment, who had been so many years his cares and hopes, went to the quick indeed. They all died together, and not one of them was left alive. They died suddenly. To have that day come upon them unawares, like a thief in the night, when they were feasting and not at their sacrifices, could not but add much to his grief, considering what a tender concern he always had for his children's souls. It was looked upon to be an immediate hand of God, and a token of his wrath: so Bildad construed it, ch. 8. 4. They were taken away when he had most need of them to comfort him under his other losses. Such miserable comforters are all creatures; in God only have we a present help at all times.

19. Had we seen the house fall upon the heads of Job's children, we should perhaps have attributed it to the natural force of a vehement blast, when now we know it was the work of a spirit. Human reason is apt to ascribe those things to an ordinary course of natural causes, which the God of nature doth by supernatural agents.—Hall.

Ver. 20—22. *Job's patience and piety under his troubles.*

The devil had done all he desired leave to do against Job, to provoke him to curse God. If his riches had been, as Satan insinuated, the only principle of his religion, now he had certainly lost his religion; but the account we have in these verses sufficiently proves the devil a liar.

Job humbled himself under the hand of God, and composed himself with quieting considerations. He reasons from the common state of human life, which he describes with application to himself; Naked came I, as others do, out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither, into the lap of our common mother, the earth; as the child, when it is sick or weary, lays its head in its mother's bosom. Dust we were in our original, and to dust we return, Gen. 3. 19. St. Paul refers to this of Job, 1 Tim. 6. 7. We brought nothing of this world's goods into the world, but have them from others; and it is certain that we can carry nothing out, but must leave them to others. We come into the world naked; not only unarmed, but unclothed. The sin we are born in, makes us naked to our shame, in the eyes of the holy God. We go out of the world naked; the body does, though

the sanctified soul goes clothed, 2 Cor. 5. 3. Death strips us of all our enjoyments; clothing can neither warm nor adorn a dead body. This consideration silenced Job under all his losses. He is but reduced to his first condition. He is but where he must have been at last, and is only unclothed, or unloaded rather, a little sooner than he expected. If we put off our clothes before we go to bed, it is some inconvenience, but it may be the better borne when it is near bed-time.

He gave glory to God, and expressed great veneration for the Divine Providence, and submission to its disposals. We may well rejoice to find Job in this good frame, because upon this the trial of his integrity was put. He acknowledged the hand of God both in the mercies he had formerly enjoyed, and in the afflictions he was now exercised with. God gave us our being, made us, and not we ourselves; he gave us our wealth; it was not our own ingenuity or industry that enriched us, but God's blessing on our cares and endeavours; he gave us power to get wealth; not only made the creatures for us, but bestowed upon us our share. The same that gave, hath taken away; and may not God do what he will with his own? See how Job looks above instruments, and keeps his eye upon the First Cause.

He adores God in both. Afflictions must not divert us from, but quicken us to the exercises of religion. He has still the same great and good thoughts of God that ever he had, and is as forward as ever to speak them to his praise.

When we have considered aright the dreadful change in Job's circumstances between the morning and evening of that eventful day, we shall be able to form some faint idea of the pressure of affliction upon this servant of God; and the strength of his faith and grace appears in the manner in which he supported it. We may be impoverished, stripped, and bereaved; no man can declare all that we may suffer, even if the children of God and the heirs of glory. But if we are such, our great interest is safe, and all will work together for our good. If in all our troubles we look to the Lord, he will support us. The Lord is righteous. Our all is from his gift; we have forfeited it by sin, and ought not to complain if he takes any part from us.

Here is the honourable testimony which the Holy Ghost gives to Job. In all this,

Job did not act amiss. Discontent and impatience do, in effect, charge God with folly. Against these Job carefully watched; and so must we, acknowledging that as God has done right, but we have done wickedly, so God has done wisely, but we have done foolishly, very foolishly.

May we be enabled to choose the good part which shall never be taken from us; may we learn to set our affections on things above; may we, after the example of Job, learn to repress our rebellious passions, to humble ourselves before God for our sins, to adore his wisdom and righteousness, and learn by all our troubles to get nearer to his mercy-seat, and into communion with him. And may the malice and power of Satan render that Saviour more precious to our souls, who came to destroy the works of the devil; who, to effect our salvation, was willing to suffer from that enemy far more than Job suffered, or we can conceive.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1—6. *Satan obtains leave to try Job by bodily afflictions.*

The malicious, unreasonable importunity of the great persecutor of the saints is represented, Rev. 12. 10, by his accusing them before God day and night, still repeating and urging that against them, which has been many times answered: so did Satan accuse Job day after day.

He had been permitted to prove Job's sincerity with the most overwhelming and sudden loss of his whole substance and all his children; but instead of cursing, Job blessed and worshipped God. Thus he held fast his integrity, and showed the uprightness and simplicity of his heart. There was not the least ground for Satan's charge of selfishness. Of this the Lord reminded Job's malicious accuser, who had "without cause" moved him to destroy Job's property and comforts, and who meant, if possible, to destroy his soul.

How well is it for us, that neither men nor devils are to be our judges; but our judgment proceeds from the Lord, whose judgment never errs. Job is commended for his constancy. Still he holds fast his integrity, as his weapon, and thou canst not disarm him; as his treasure, and thou canst not rob him of that. God speaks of it with pleasure, and something of triumph in the power of his own grace. Thus the trial of Job's faith was found to his praise and honour, 1 Pet. 1. 7.

What excuse can Satan make for his failure? "Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life." Some truth there is in this, that self-love and self-preservation are powerful commanding principles in the hearts of men.

But Satan grounds upon this an accusation of Job, representing him as unnatural to those about him, and as wholly selfish, and minding nothing but his own ease and safety. Thus are the ways and people of God often misrepresented by the devil and his agents. This served as a pretext for desiring that Job might be tried with personal afflictions.

"Put forth *thine* hand now, (for I find *my* hand too short to reach him, and too weak to hurt him,) make him sick with smiting him, Mic. 6. 13, and then he will curse thee to thy face, and let go his integrity." Nothing is more likely to put the mind into disorder, than pain and distemper of body. St. Paul himself had much ado to bear a thorn in the flesh, nor could he have borne it without special grace from Christ, 2 Cor. 12. 7, 9.

A permission is granted to Satan to make this trial. God afflicts not willingly, nor takes any pleasure in grieving the children of men, much less his own children, Lam. 3. 33; and therefore, if it must be done, let Satan do it, who delights in such work. Do thy worst with him, but with a limitation. Afflict him, but not to death. Satan would have taken the life, if he might; but God had mercy in store for Job after this trial, and therefore he must survive it, however he is afflicted. If God did not chain up the roaring lion, how soon would he devour us! But as far as he permits the wrath of Satan and wicked men to proceed against his people, he will make it turn to his praise and theirs, and the remainder thereof he will restrain, Ps. 76. 10. "Save his soul," that is, his reason; so some; otherwise it will be no fair trial. It would be the language not of his heart, but of his distemper.

Job, thus maligned by Satan, was a type of Christ, the first prophecy of whom was, that Satan should bruise his heel. Gen. 3. 15, and he was foiled, as in Job's case. Satan tempted him to let go his integrity, his adoption, Matt. 4. 3, 6. If thou be the Son of God. He entered into the heart of Judas who betrayed Christ, and had permission to touch his bone and his flesh, without exception of his life, be-

cause by dying he was to do that which Job could not do—destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

4. The meaning is, "property for person."—*Good.* The Greek version has "skin after skin."

Ver. 7-10. *Job's sufferings—His wife tempts him to curse God.*

His own children the devil tempts first, and draws them to sin, and afterward torments, when thereby he has brought them to ruin; but this child of God he tormented with affliction, and then tempted to make a bad use of his affliction. He provokes Job to curse God, by smiting him with sore boils.

The disease was very grievous. One boil, when gathering, gives abundance of pain and uneasiness. What a condition was Job in, with boils all over him, no part free, and those as raging as the devil could make them! He has no help afforded him, his children and servants were dead, his wife unkind, and his disorder such that few cared to come near him, ch. 19. 14, 17. If at any time we are exercised with sore and grievous distempers, let us not think ourselves dealt with otherwise than as God has sometimes dealt with the best of his saints and servants. We know not how much Satan may have a hand, by Divine permission, in the diseases with which the children of men, and especially the children of God, are afflicted.

He sat down among the ashes, in the place and posture of a penitent, who, in token of his self-abhorrence, lay in dust and ashes, ch. 42. 6; Isa. 58. 5; Jonah 3. 6. Thus did Job humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and bring his mind to his condition. The Greek version reads it, "He sat down upon a dung-hill without the city."

Satan urges him, by the persuasions of his own wife, to curse God. She was spared to him, when the rest of his comforts were taken away, for this purpose, to be a troubler and tempter to him. If Satan leaves any thing that he has permission to take away, it is with a design of mischief. It is policy to send his temptations by the hand of those that are dear to us, as he tempted Adam by Eve, and Christ by Peter. We must therefore carefully watch, that we be not drawn to say or do a wrong thing by the influence, interest, or entreaty, even of those for whose opinion and favour we have ever so great a value.

When this additional calamity came

upon Job, his wife despaired of help, and upbraided him as absurd in his religion. The meaning of her advice has been disputed, for the Hebrew word signifies both to bless and curse, but it is the word used by Satan, ver. 5, when he asserted that Job would "curse God to his face." Her counsel was evidently suggested by Satan, and both her words and Job's answer prove that it was desperate, not pious advice which she gave him. It therefore appears that our translation gives the true sense, and that, being driven to desperate rebellion against God, she instigated Job to despair and blasphemy.

Thus Satan still endeavours to draw men from God, as he did our first parents, by suggesting hard thoughts of Him, as one that envies the happiness, and delights in the misery of his creatures, than which nothing is more false. Another artifice Satan uses, is, to drive men from their religion by loading them with scoffs and reproaches for their adherence to it: we have reason to expect it, but we are fools if we heed it. Our Master himself has undergone this. These are the blackest and most horrid of all Satan's temptations, and yet such as good men have sometimes been violently assaulted with. Nothing is more contrary to natural conscience than blaspheming God, nor to natural sense than self-murder; therefore the suggestion of either of these comes immediately from Satan. Lord, lead us not into temptation, not into such, not into any temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Job resisted and overcame the temptation. He showed his constant resolution to cleave to God, to keep his good thoughts of him, and not to let go his integrity. Nothing could be more admirable than Job's reply. He reproved his wife with firmness, yet with temper.

Those are angry and sin not, who are angry only at sin, Rev. 2. 2. When Peter was a Satan to Christ, he told him plainly, Thou art an offence to me. If those whom we think wise and good, at any time speak that which is foolish and bad, we ought to reprove them faithfully, that we suffer not sin upon them. Temptations to curse God ought to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence: whoever persuades us to that, must be looked upon as our enemy, to whom if we yield, it is at our peril. Job did not curse God, and then use Adam's excuse. He reasoned

against the temptation. "What!" says he, in astonishment at her desperate language, "shall we, guilty, polluted, worthless creatures, receive so many unmerited blessings from a just and holy God, and shall we refuse to accept the punishment of our sins, when we suffer so much less than we deserve?"

If we receive so many comforts, shall we not receive some afflictions? We are taught the worth of mercies, by being made to want them sometimes. If we receive so much good for the body, shall we not receive some good for the soul; that is, some afflictions, by which we partake of God's holiness? Heb. 12. 10. Let murmuring, as well as boasting, be for ever excluded.

Thus far Job most honourably stood the trial, and appeared the brightest in the furnace of affliction. Though there might be stirrings and risings of corruption in his heart, yet grace had the upper hand.

9. Some who contend for the word *Barah* being translated "blessing," render this verse, and ver. 5, as a sarcastic address, or as an interrogation. "Even yet dost thou hold fast thine integrity, blessing God and dying?" The passage, ch. 1. 5, is rendered by *Good*, "My sons may have sinned, nor blessed God."—See *Parkhurst, Hales, and others*. Whichever rendering of the original is correct, the import of the passage is the same. The Greek version amplifies the lamentations of Job's wife, and makes her conclude by saying, "But speak some word unto the Lord, and die!"

Ver. 11—13. *Job's friends come to comfort him.*

The friends of Job seem to have been eminent for their rank as well as for their wisdom and piety. To have such friends, added more to his happiness in the day of his prosperity, than all he was master of. Much of the comfort of this life lies in acquaintance and friendship with those that are prudent and virtuous; and he that has a few such friends, ought to value them highly.

Now that Job was in adversity, they come to share his griefs, as formerly they had come to share his comforts. Concerning these visitors, observe, that they came with a design, and we have reason to think it was a sincere design, to comfort him, and yet proved miserable comforters, through their unskillful management of his case. Many that aim well, by mistake, come short of their aim.

Observing Job miserably altered, they did not leave him in loathing, but expressed the more tenderness toward him. Coming to mourn with him, they vented their undissembled grief. Coming to

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1—10. *Job complains that he was born.*

comfort him, they sat down with him, and put themselves into the same humble and uneasy place. Every day, for seven days together, they came and sat with him, as his companions in tribulation.

It would appear that they suspected his unexampled calamities were judgments for some enormous crimes, which he had veiled under a hypocritical profession; but they did not abruptly bring this charge against him.

Solomon gives us the true character of a friend, Prov. 17. 17. It is the note and trial of our love to God, when we love Him at all times, whatever he doth with us; and it is the argument of true love to our brethren, when we love and own them at all times, whatsoever they endure from the hand of God and man. This Christ approves of in his disciples, Luke 22. 28. It is easy to continue with Christ at a feast or a full table, but in a temptation to continue with him, shows a disciple indeed. Many look upon it only as a compliment to visit their friends in sorrow; we must look upon it as a duty. Christ puts it as one of those visible acts of duty upon which he will pronounce his blessing, Matt. 25. 36. Christ is not sick in his person. He is in heaven, where is no sin, therefore no sickness shall ever enter. He means sickness in his members; kindness to them he looks on as done to himself. It is a point of religion which evidences the truth of religion—if religion live in the heart, this will be a fruit in the life.—(15.)

Behold these men, how amiable they appear in the posture of woe! Are not they, evidencing such a spirit of love for their friend, a fit pattern to imitate? But we have a brighter pattern than they, even our Lord Jesus Christ himself; who, when he saw our fallen state, came down from heaven to seek and to save us; yea, "though rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich." What marvellous grace was here! and still, as our Great High Priest, he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been himself in all things tempted like as we are, on purpose that he might succour them that are tempted. If, then, the example of Job's friends be not sufficient to commend to us pity for others, let us seek the mind that was in Christ. Let the principle of love be in us like a spring, ever ready to act the moment that a scope for action is afforded.—(61.)

For the space of seven days Job's friends had sat by him in silence without offering consolation; at the same time Satan assaulted his mind to shake his confidence, and to fill him with hard thoughts of God. His permission seems to have extended to this as well as to torturing the body. Job was an especial type of Christ, whose inward sufferings, both in the garden and on the cross, were the most dreadful; and in a great degree occasioned by the assaults of Satan in that hour of darkness. These inward trials show the reason of the change that took place in his conduct, from entire resignation to the impatience which appears here, and in the subsequent part of the book.

The experienced believer who knows that a few drops of this bitter cup are more dreadful than the sharpest outward afflictions, when he is favoured with a sweet sense of the love and presence of God, will not be surprised to find that Job proved a man of like passions with others; but will rejoice that Satan was disappointed, and could not prove him a hypocrite, for though he cursed the day of his birth, he did not curse his God.

Job cursed the day of his birth. When we consider the iniquity in which we were conceived and born, we have reason to reflect with sorrow and shame upon the day of our birth, and to say that the day of our death, by which we are freed from sin, Rom. 6. 7, is far better, Eccl. 7. 1. But to curse the day of our birth, because then we entered upon the calamities of life, is to quarrel with God. Certainly there is no condition of life a man can be in while in this world, but he may, in it, so honour God, and make sure happiness for himself in a better world, that he will have no reason to wish he had never been born. Yet there are those in hell, who with good reason wish they had never been born, as Judas, Matt. 26. 24. But, on this side hell, there can be no reason for so vain and ungrateful a wish. Lastly, let us observe, to the honour of the spiritual life above the natural, that though many have cursed the day of their first birth, never any cursed the day of their new birth, nor wished they had never had grace, and the Spirit of grace given them: those are the most excellent gifts, above life and being itself, and will never be a burden.

The particular expressions which Job

used in cursing his day, are full of poetical figures, and create much difficulty to the critics: we need not be particular in our observations upon them.

The wildness, absurdity, and impossibility of his wishes denote the tempest of his soul; they are utterly unbecoming a sinner under a dispensation of mercy, or a believer in a state of grace. But at such times of inward darkness and temptation, Satan so stirs up the corruption of the heart, that promises and truths are forgotten, and mercies are disregarded. The soul approaches to blasphemy, but is held back by the counteracting of Divine grace; thus the dreadful effects are prevented, and in time the soul recovers composure. Job doubtless was afterwards ashamed of it, and we may suppose what his judgment of it is in everlasting happiness.

Ver. 11—19. *Job complaining that he did not die as soon as born.*

Job next inquired why, if he must be born, he did not immediately die? He expostulated with those present at his birth for their tender attention to him, without which he should not have lived to his present sufferings.

See here, 1. What a weak and helpless creature man is, when he comes into the world, and how slender the thread of life. We are ready to breathe our last, as soon as we begin to breathe at all. We can do nothing for ourselves, as other creatures can, but should drop into the grave, if not prevented. 2. What merciful and tender care Divine Providence takes of us, at our entrance into the world. Why were we not cut off as soon as we were born? Not because we did not deserve it; justly might such weeds have been plucked up as soon as they appeared: not because we did, or could take any care of ourselves and our own safety; no creature comes into the world so helpless as man. It was not our might that preserved us, but God's power and providence upheld our frail lives, and his pity and patience spared our forfeited lives. Natural affection is put into parents' hearts by God. 3. What vanity and vexation of spirit attends human life! If we had not a God to serve in this world, and better things to hope for in another, considering the faculties we are endued with, and the troubles we are surrounded by, we should be strongly tempted to wish that we had died in infancy, which had prevented much sin and misery.

Under Job's temptation he thought chiefly of relief from present suffering: he knew that no pain was felt in the grave, and for the moment he scarcely looked any further, though at other times he expressed faith and hope concerning the eternal world. In what he says there is much truth; but if freedom from suffering were all, there would be little reason to look forward to death with comfort.

See the evil of impatience, fretfulness, and discontent. When they prevail, they are impious and ungrateful; they are a slighting and undervaluing of God's favour. How much soever life is embittered, we must say, It was of the Lord's mercies that we died not at our birth, that we were not consumed. Hatred of life is a contradiction to the common sense and sentiments of mankind. To desire to die, that we may be with Christ, that we may be free from sin, that we may be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, is the effect and evidence of grace; but to desire to die, only that we may be delivered from the troubles of this life, savours of corruption. It is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, be it living or dying, and so to live to the Lord, and die to the Lord, as to be his in both, Rom. 14. 8.

Observe how Job describes the repose of the grave; which, provided the soul also be at rest in God, may much assist our triumphs over it.

There the wicked cease from troubling: when persecutors die, they can no longer persecute. When the persecuted die, they are out of the danger of being any further troubled. There the weary are at rest: their pilgrimage is a weary pilgrimage; sin and the world they are weary of, their services, sufferings, and expectations, they are wearied with; but in the grave they rest from all their labours, Rev. 14. 13; Isa. 57. 2. They are easy there.

But there remaineth a better rest for the people of God. A rest from sin, temptation, conflict, sorrows, and labours, in the presence and enjoyment of God. There believers rest in Jesus, nay, as far as we trust in the Lord Jesus and obey him, we here find rest to our souls, though in the world we have tribulation.

Those that were here enslaved, are there at liberty. Those that were here doomed to perpetual servitude, that could call nothing their own, there are no longer under control; this is a good reason why

those that have power, should use it moderately, and those in subjection, should bear it patiently, yet a little while.

Those that were at a vast distance from each other, there are upon a level. The small and great are there, all are alike among the dead. The tedious pomp and state which attend the great, are at an end there; all the inconveniences of a poor and low condition are likewise over.

Ver. 20—26. *Job complains of his life, because of his misery.*

Job here complains that his life was continued; having cursed the day of his birth, here he courts the day of his death. Life is called light, because pleasant and serviceable for walking and working; but it is candle-light; the longer it burns, the shorter, and the nearer to the socket, it gets. This light is said to be given us; for if it were not daily renewed to us by a fresh gift, it would be lost. The continuance and period of life must be according to God's will, not according to ours. It is not fit that we should be consulted how long we would live, and when we would die; our times are in a better hand than our own. Job dared not think of rushing into the presence of his Judge by an act of desperate rebellion, and murder; but he would exceedingly rejoice if eased of his pain and misery by death. He was like a man who had lost his way, and had no prospect of escape, or hope of better times. But surely he was in an ill frame for death when so unwilling to live! The event fully showed why the Lord continued his life.

Let those who are tempted to long for death, compare their present sufferings, not with the quiet of the grave, but with the scriptural declarations of the state of the damned; which must be the lot of all who die in rebellion, and by deliberate wilful murder. Such desperation is the suggestion of the old liar—the murderer from the beginning. Let them stop their ears against his temptations, and hearken to the Saviour's inviting voice, and come to him with their burdens and sorrows; they shall find rest to their souls, and learn to bless God for temporal life as the means of eternal salvation.

If the miseries of this life, contrary to nature, can make death itself desirable, shall not much more the hopes and prospects of a better life, to which death is our passage, make it so, and set us above the fear of it? It may be a sin

to long for death, but it is no sin to long for heaven. Let it be our constant care to get ready for another world, and then let us leave it to God to order the circumstances of our removal thither as he thinks fit. Grace teaches us, in the midst of life's greatest comforts, to be willing to die, and, in the midst of its greatest crosses, to be willing to live.

To excuse his vehement complaints, Job mentions the excess of his sufferings. In his present afflicted state, troubles were continually felt, and were likely to be so. He saw no way of deliverance open, nor knew he what course to take; his way was hedged up with thorns, that he could not find his path: see ch. 23. 8; Lam. 3. 7.

Even in his former prosperous state, troubles were continually feared; so that then he was never easy. He had not been secure, nor indulged himself in ease and softness, yet trouble came, to convince and remind him of the vanity of the world, which yet he had not forgotten when he lived at ease. Thus his way was hid; he knew not wherefore God contended with him. Now this consideration, instead of aggravating his grief, might rather have served to alleviate it. Nothing will make trouble easy so much as the testimony of our consciences, that, in some measure, we did our duty in a day of prosperity: also an expectation of trouble will make it sit the lighter when it comes. The less it is a surprise, the less it is a terror.

In prosperity let us all watch against carnal security. Under trials let us pray for patience, and if we are strongly tempted to the contrary, let us look to Him who suffered being tempted, that He might be able to succour them that are tempted. Then, though our way seem stopped, and our hope lost for a season; we shall ere long be enabled to declare from our own experience, that they who trust in and wait for the Lord, shall not be ashamed.

The afflicted and tempted christian knows something of this season of heaviness. Though he sink not so low as Job; yet when he has been looking too much at the things that are seen, some chastisement of his heavenly Father will sometimes give him a taste of this disgust of life, and a glance at these dark regions of despair. Nor is there any help until God shall cast the light of his countenance upon him, and restore to him the joys of his salvation.—(25.)

There is indeed an essential difference between the true believer and the mere professor. The former will never finally apostatize or despair; yet under urgent troubles and temptations the evil of the heart will frequently rise up, and burst forth in very culpable words and actions. None but the Saviour ever endured the extremity of anguish and temptation, without abatement of love, mixture of sin, or indications of impatience.

Blessed be God, the earth is full of his goodness, though full of our wickedness. This present life may be made very tolerable if we accommodate ourselves to our circumstances, and attend to our duty. We are under a dispensation of mercy, and may hope for eternal mercy, whatever we have been, if now willing to accept of Jesus Christ to be our Saviour from wrath and from sin.

From the beginning of this chapter to ch. 42. 6, the book of Job is written in verse.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1-6. *Eliphaz reproves Job.*

Job's friends concluded from his sufferings and impatient wishes that he was a wicked man. They therefore charge this upon him to induce him to repent. Eliphaz, who seems to have been the elder or the superior, opens the matter. Thus when Satan failed to prove his charge against Job, he suggested to his friends the same suspicion of hypocrisy, that they might grieve and tempt him by it. Satan undertook to prove him a hypocrite by afflicting him; and his friends concluded him to be one because he was so afflicted and showed impatience. This we must keep in mind, if we would understand what passed.

Eliphaz excuses the trouble he is about to give to Job by his discourse. He will not promise much, but will try if he can propose any thing that suits Job's case. He speaks of Job, and his present afflicted condition, with tenderness. We ought to be afraid of grieving any, especially those that are already in grief, lest we add affliction to the afflicted, as David's enemies, Ps. 69. 26. God himself, though he afflicts justly, yet does not afflict willingly, Lam. 3. 33. But a pious zeal for God's honour, and the spiritual welfare of Job, laid him under this necessity of speaking. It is foolish pity not to reprove our friends, even in afflic-

tion, for what they say or do amiss. Whether men take it well or ill, we must, with wisdom and meekness, do our duty, and discharge a good conscience.

He charges Job with weakness and faint-heartedness. He takes notice of Job's former serviceableness to the comfort of others. With suitable counsels and comforts he had strengthened the weak. It is our duty not only to quicken and encourage ourselves in the way of duty, but we must also strengthen the weak hands of others. A good word, well and wisely spoken, may do more good than perhaps we think of.

But he made light of Job's afflictions, and aggravated his impatience, concluding this part of his argument with a taunting reflection, Was this his fear of God, and confidence in him? his hope of future good, and upright walking, for which he was noted? Was all this come to nothing? Did it end in the detection of his hypocrisy, by the judgment of God upon him, and his rebellion under it? Just commendations will introduce needful reproofs, by preparing the mind to receive them as the result of love, but if the application be overcharged, it will lose its effect. It is more easy to counsel than to practise; and we all find that our own arguments to others are insufficient to calm our own souls in the hour of distress. It behoves us to watch and pray that we may not, by our own conduct, defeat the effect of our instructions and expose ourselves and the truths of God to reproach and contempt. Men make few allowances for those who have instructed others. Even pious friends will not always enter into our feelings, but count that a touch which we feel as a wound.

Learn from hence caution, even in a zeal for God and his glory, not to add to affliction, but to draw off the mind of the sufferer, from brooding over the affliction, to look at the God of mercies in the affliction—to hear the rod and who hath appointed it, Micah 6. 9. And how can this be done so effectually as by looking to Christ Jesus, in whose unequalled sorrows every child of God would soonest learn to forget his own.—(37.)

6. This verse is differently read in several editions of our common English bibles; the original, and all the ancient versions, put "thy hope" before "the uprightness of thy ways." So does the Geneva, and most of the editions of the last translation; but one of the earliest, in 1612, has it, "Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways, and thy hope?" Both the

Assembly's Annotations and Pool's have that reading; and an edition in 1660, reads it, "Is not thy fear thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope? Does it not appear now, that all the religion, both of thy devotion, and of thy conversation, was only in hope and confidence that thou shouldst grow rich by it? Was it not all mercenary?" The very thing that Satan suggested.—*Henry.*

Ver. 7—11. *Eliphaz maintains that God's judgments are for the wicked.*

Eliphaz here advances another argument to prove Job a hypocrite, and will have not only his impatience under his afflictions to be evidence against him, but even his afflictions themselves, being so very great. He argues,

1. That good men were never thus ruined. If we understand it of a final and eternal destruction, his principle is true; none that are innocent and righteous perish for ever: it is only a man of sin that is a son of perdition, 2 Thess. 2. 3. By innocent and righteous, he meant true believers, godly men, in opposition to the profane or hypocritical. Even then it is ill applied to Job; he did not thus perish, nor was he cut off: a man is never undone till he is in hell. But if we understand it of any temporal calamity, his principle is not true. The righteous perish, Isa. 57. 1. There is one event both to the righteous and to the wicked, Eccl. 9. 2, both in life and death; the great and certain difference is after death. Even before Job's time, there were instances to contradict this principle. Did not righteous Abel perish being innocent? One of the sorest trials to a believer is, that our infirmities may give occasion to our brethren to suspect and reproach us as hypocrites. Where this is the case, all our conduct will be imputed to corrupt motives. Our worst mistakes are occasioned by drawing wrong inferences from undeniable truths. It is certain that none ever perished being innocent, that no godly man ever was finally miserable; no impenitent sinner finally happy, and that many wicked men have been wonderfully destroyed. But it is equally true that many righteous are sorely afflicted, suddenly cut off, and taken to heaven, while many wicked live long and prosper, and die in peace, being reserved to the day of judgment. Even where the doctrine was sound, the application was unjust.

2. That wicked men were often thus ruined: for the proof of this, he vouches his own observation. We have daily instances of that.

Ver. 12—21. *The vision of Eliphaz, showing the excellency and holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man.*

Eliphaz next related a vision with which he had been favoured. Previous to the giving of the sacred scriptures, believers had no communication from God, except by tradition, or immediate revelation. While he lay revolving many thoughts in his mind, a spirit appeared to him. He could not describe what he had seen, but he remembered the words which were distinctly uttered, amidst the silence of the night.

It was brought him in the night, when retired from the world, and all about him was composed and quiet. The more we are withdrawn from the world and the things of it, the fitter we are for communion with God. When we are communing with our own hearts, and are still, Ps. 4. 4, then is a proper time for the Holy Spirit to commune with us. A holy awe and reverence of God and his majesty, being struck upon his spirit, Eliphaz was prepared for a Divine visit.

It was real, and not a dream, not a fancy; an image was before his eyes, he saw it; at first, it passed and repassed before his face, but, at length, it stood still to speak to him. It put him into great consternation. Ever since man sinned, it has been terrible to him to receive communications from heaven, as conscious to himself that he can expect no good tidings thence.

Before the message was delivered, there was profound silence. The message was this, "Shall mortal man be more just than God, the immortal God? Shall a man be thought to be, or pretend to be more pure than his Maker?" What! sinful man! shall he pretend to be more just, more pure, than God, who being his Maker, is his Lord and Owner? What justice and purity there is in man, God is the author of it, and therefore is himself more just and pure: see Ps. 94. 9, 10.

God charges even angels with folly, vanity, weakness, infirmity, and imperfection, in comparison with himself. He putteth no trust in them; instead of making them his counsellors, or submitting his conduct to their judgment, he charges them with folly. How dreadful, then, the pride and presumption of man! How great the patience of God! Thence Eliphaz infers how much less man is, how much less to be trusted or gloried in.

If there is such distance between God and angels, what is there between God and man! See how man is represented here :

1. Look upon man *in his life*. Take man in his best estate, and he is very despicable in comparison with the holy angels. Angels are pure spirits, the souls of men dwell in houses of clay ; such the bodies of men are. And the body is a clog to the soul, its cage, its prison. It is a house of clay, mean and mouldering ; an earthen vessel, soon broken, as it was first formed, according to the good pleasure of the Potter. It is a cottage, not a house of cedar, or a house of ivory, but of clay, which would soon be in ruins if not kept in constant repair. Angels are fixed, but the very foundation of that house of clay in which man dwells, is in the dust ; the uncertainty of the foundation will hasten its fall, and it will sink with its own weight. We stand but upon the dust ; some have a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others, but still it is the earth that stays us up, and will shortly swallow us up. Angels are immortal, but man is soon crushed, the earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved, he dies and wastes away, is crushed like a moth, as easily, as quickly. A little thing will do it ; he is crushed before the face of the moth, so the word is. If some lingering distemper, which consumes like a moth, be commissioned to destroy him, he can no more resist it than an acute distemper, which comes roaring upon him like a lion : see Hos. 5. 12, 14. Shall such a creature pretend to fathom the mysteries of Providence? to blame the appointments of God? to charge God with injustice, or give opinion on subjects where he knows little or nothing? Is such a creature as this to be trusted in, or can any service be expected from him, by that God who puts no trust in angels themselves?

Hath not man cause to lie as low in his thoughts as that from whence he is taken out? Should not he be humbled to the dust who is dust? The nearer we are admitted to come to heaven in our addresses, the more should we remember we are but earth. And if the body be but clay, and hath but a foundation of dust, do not bestow too much care, too much cost thereon. How many there are who bestow much pains to trim up a vile body, and neglect a precious soul! You shall find a body neatly clothed, and drest, with a soul all naked and unready ; a body fed,

and a soul starved ; a body full of the creature, and a soul empty of Christ—these are poor souls indeed!—(15.)

2. Look upon him *in his death*, and he appears yet more despicable, and unfit to be trusted. Men are mortal, and dying. They are dying daily, and continually wasting. Their life is short, and in a little time they are cut off. In death, all their excellency passes away ; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death, but die with them ; nor shall their pomp, their wealth, or power, descend after them. Their wisdom cannot save them from death ; they die without wisdom, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves, digging their graves with their own teeth. It is so common a thing, that no one heeds it ; they perish without any regarding it, or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the subject of serious thought.

The eternal damnation of sinners is here spoken of, as well as their temporal death. "They are destroyed, or broken to pieces, by death, from morning to evening ; and if they repent not, they perish for ever ;" so some read it. They perish for ever because they regard not God and their duty, they consider not their latter end, Lam. 1. 9. They have no excellency but that which death takes away, and they die the second death, for want of wisdom to lay hold on eternal life. Shall such a mean, weak, foolish, sinful, dying creature as this, pretend to be more just than God, and more pure than his Maker? No, instead of quarrelling with his afflictions, let him wonder that he is out of hell.

We know not what was the character of Eliphaz at the time he saw this apparition, or for what purpose the vision was vouchsafed to him. From some observations, ch. 33. 14—30, it is probable it was the call of Divine grace to his soul ; intended as an awful warning by deeply impressing upon his mind the evil of sin, thought so little of in a careless world—and of the righteous judgment of God which would overtake every transgressor. In reference to our justification through the righteousness of God our Saviour, and our cleansing through the purification sacrifice, in the covenant of our redemption, we may be warranted in rendering these lines, "Can a mortal be justified without God? Without his Maker can

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1-5. *Eliphaz urges that the sin of sinners is their ruin.*

man be cleansed?" Will God justify sinful mortals, and clear them from guilt? will he do so without their having an interest in the righteousness and glorious help of their promised Redeemer, when angels, the ministering spirit before his throne, receive the just recompense of their sins? The reference to fallen angels is remarkable: see 2 Pet. 2. 4; Jude 6. Notwithstanding the seeming impunity of men for a short time, though living without God in the world, their doom is as certain as that of the fallen angels, and is continually overtaking them. Yet careless sinners note it so little that they expect not the change, nor are wise to consider their latter end.—(5)

Think, reader, how pure and holy was the Lord Jesus Christ, when, though angels are charged with folly, a voice from heaven declared Him to be God's only begotten Son, in whom he was, and is well pleased. And remember, the perfection and holiness of Jesus was that holiness which belonged to him as Redeemer and Mediator; that perfection of the work which the Father gave him to do, by which, both in doing and in dying, he hath wrought out a complete salvation. And if He was made sin for us, when he knew no sin, it was that his people might be made the righteousness of God in Him, 2 Cor. 5. 21.—(37.)

It is in vain to search through ancient or modern poetry for a description that has any pretension to rival this. Midnight, solitude, the deep sleep of all around, the dreadful chill, and horripilation or erection of the hair over the whole body—the shivering, not of the muscles only, but of the bones themselves—the gliding approach of the spectre—the abruptness of his pause—his undefined and indescribable form—are most powerful and original characters.—Good.

Whether on this occasion the internal senses of the mind were unloosed from the bodily organs to communicate with the spiritual world, or whether an actual apparition was presented to the watching eye, and real vibrations of sound caused to fall upon the hearing ear, we may not be called upon to determine, but of the reality of the fact as recorded there can be no doubt.—The multitude of ghost stories, both in ancient and modern times, contain the demonstration of their own absurdity, or may be easily traced to the weak or disturbed imaginations of the superstitious. The general persuasion, however, of all mankind, in all ages and nations, that such visitors from an unseen world may appear, and sometimes have appeared, is not totally to be disregarded as a testimony of the fact; especially since sound philosophy knows of nothing that can render the thing impossible, or very improbable. We have on the credit of revelation, in this passage, a true relation, upon which we may rely.—Fry.

Eliphaz here challenges Job to refute his arguments, and the inference he drew from his vision, by the example or opinion of any saints or servants of God. Were any of them ever visited with such Divine judgments as Job, or behaved like him under their sufferings?

The term "saints," holy, or more strictly, consecrated ones, seems in all ages to have been an epithet of the people of God. They are sanctified to be the temple and priesthood of God, through the application of the sacrifice slain in the covenant of their reconciliation.—(25)

There are two things in which Eliphaz doubts not all the saints concur with him.

1. That the sin of sinners directly tends to their own ruin. They kill themselves by some lust or other; therefore, no doubt, Job, thou hast done some foolish thing, by which thou hast brought thyself into this calamitous condition. Or, God's anger will be the death, the eternal death, of those on whom it fastens. 2. That their prosperity is short, and their destruction certain. He seems here to parallel Job's case with that which he had seen to be commonly the case of wicked people. We see worldly men taking root in the earth; on earthly things they fix their hopes, and from them they draw their comforts. The outward estate may be flourishing, but the soul cannot prosper that takes root in the earth.

Eliphaz plainly foresaw and foretold their ruin; not that he prayed for it, but he prognosticated it. The allusion was plain to Job's former prosperity, and his present calamities; yet the most notorious wickedness cannot assure us that temporal calamities will befall the doer; but there was no evidence of Job's wickedness. The application was unfair and severe.

Ver. 6-16. *God is to be regarded in affliction.*

Eliphaz now accosts Job gently, as if he would atone for the hard words he had given. He reminds him, that no affliction comes by chance; nor is to be attributed to second causes. The proportion between prosperity and adversity is not so exactly observed by Providence, as that between day and night, summer and winter; but yet it is according to the will and counsel of God. We must not attribute our afflictions to fortune, for they are

from God; nor our sins to fate, for they are from ourselves. Whatever trouble we are in, we must own that God sends it upon us, and we procure it to ourselves: the former is a reason why we should be patient, the latter why we should be penitent, when we are afflicted.

He reminds Job, that trouble and affliction are what we have all reason to expect in this world. Man is born in sin, and therefore born to trouble. Even those that are born to honour and estate, yet are born to trouble in the flesh. In our fallen state, it is become natural to us to sin, and the natural consequence of that, is affliction, Rom. 5. 12. There is nothing in this world we are born to, and can truly call our own, but sin and trouble; both are as the sparks that fly upward. Actual transgressions are the sparks that fly out of the furnace of original corruption. Such is the frailty of our bodies, and the vanity of all our enjoyments, that our troubles arise thence as naturally as the sparks fly upward; so many are they, and so fast does one follow another. Why then should we be surprised at our afflictions as strange, or quarrel with them as hard, when they are but what we are born to? Man is born to *labour*, so it is in the margin, which should make him bear his afflictions the better.

He directs Job how to behave under his affliction; "I would seek unto God; surely I would:" so it is in the original. Here is a reproof to him for not seeking God, but quarrelling with him. We should give our friends no other counsel than what we would take ourselves; that we may be easy under our afflictions, get good by them, and see a good issue of them. We must by prayer fetch in mercy and grace from God; seek to him as a Father and Friend, as one who is alone able to support and succour us, though he contend with us. His favour we must seek, to him we must address ourselves, as the Fountain and Father of all good, all consolation. Is any afflicted? Let him pray. It is heart's-ease, a salve for every sore. We must by patience refer ourselves and our cause to God. Having spread it before him, I would leave it with him; having laid it at his feet, I would lodge it in his hand; here I am, let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good. If our cause be indeed a good cause, we need not fear committing it to God, for he is both just and kind.

Eliphaz encourages Job thus to seek to

God, and commit his cause to him. He recommends to his consideration, God's almighty power and sovereign dominion. By this Eliphaz intends to convince Job of his fault, and folly in quarrelling with God. His works are unsearchable and above our inquiries; nor must we strive with our Maker. Also, what more encouraging than to see that he is one to whom power belongs. He can do great things and marvellous for our relief, when we are brought ever so low.

Observe, when Eliphaz would show what great things God doeth, he speaks of his giving rain, which, because it is a common thing, we are apt to look upon as a little thing; but if we duly consider how it is produced, and what is produced by it, we shall see it to be a great work, both of power and goodness. By this, the barren earth, being made to yield a large increase, the poor are supplied, placed in safety, and even exalted. Too often the great Author of all our comforts, and the manner in which they are conveyed to us, are unnoticed, because they are received as things of course.

In the administration of Providence, Eliphaz noticed especially the surprising manner in which the politic counsels of worldly wise men are disappointed, their crafty devices turned against them, and they involved in ruin. They are left to hesitate even in the plainest matters, as if they had lost their senses.

Also, how God favours the cause of the poor and humble. He exalts the humble. Those whom proud men contrive to crush, he raises from under their feet, and sets them in safety, Ps. 12. 5. The lowly in heart, and those that mourn, he advances, comforts, and makes to dwell on high, in the munitions of rocks, Isa. 33. 16. He delivers the oppressed. The designs of the crafty are to ruin the poor: but God takes under his special protection those who, being unable to help themselves, being devoted to his praise, have committed themselves to him.

The effect of this is, 1. That weak and timorous saints are comforted. The experiences of some are encouragements to others, to hope the best in the worst of times; for it is the glory of God to send help to the helpless, and hope to the hopeless. 2. That daring sinners are confounded and compelled to acknowledge the justice of God's proceedings: see Ps. 76. 8, 9; Isa. 26. 11.

Ver. 17—27. *The happy end of God's correction.*

Observe the word of caution and exhortation that Eliphaz gives to Job; "Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. Call it a chastening, which comes from the father's love, and is designed for the child's good. Call it the chastening of the Almighty, to whom it is wisdom and duty to submit, and who will be a God all-sufficient to all those that trust in him. Do not despise it; it is a copious word in the original. Be not averse to it. We need the rod, and we deserve it; and therefore we ought not to think it either strange or hard if we feel the smart of it. Do not put it from thee, as that which is hurtful, or not useful, because, for the present, it is not joyous, but grievous. Do not overlook and disregard it, but take notice of it as the voice of God, and a messenger from heaven. Submit to the chastening, and study to answer the call, to answer the end of it, and then thou reverencest it. Observe also the encouragement which Eliphaz gives Job, thus to accommodate himself to his condition.

1. The nature and property of it would be altered: though it looked like a man's misery, it would really be his bliss. A good man is happy, *though* he be afflicted, for, whatever he has lost, he has not lost his enjoyment of God, nor his title to heaven; nay, he is happy, *because* he is afflicted; correction mortifies his corruptions, weans his heart from the world, draws him nearer to God, brings him to his bible, brings him to his knees, works him for, and so is working for him, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:—happy therefore is the man whom God correcteth, Jam. 1. 12.

2. The issue and consequence of it would be very good. When God makes sore by the rebukes of his Providence, he binds up by the consolations of his Spirit; which oftentimes abound most as afflictions do abound, to the unspeakable satisfaction of patient sufferers. Though he wounds, yet his hands make whole; he supports his people under their afflictions, and in due time he delivers them.

Making a wound sometimes is part of the cure. The Lord wounds that he may heal, or fit our wounds for healing. Our wound is not wide enough to let out the sinful corruptions of our hearts, to let in the searching instruments and corrosives of the law, or the balm and comfortable

applications of the gospel. The woundings and smittings of God are preparatory to our healing. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, Prov. 27. 6; his wounds are faithful because he wounds in faithfulness. Let the righteous Lord smite me, and it shall be a kindness. As God is the great corrector of his people, so he is their great physician. He doth not make sores, and leave others to bind up—God never makes a wound too great for his own cure. And not only doth he heal the wounds which himself makes, but those which men make, even all the wounds which the utmost power and malice of man can make.—(15.)

This is general; but in the following verses Eliphaz applies directly to Job, and gives him many precious promises of what God would do for him, if he did but humble himself under his hand. And though in every thing which Job's friends said, they were not directed by the Spirit of God, for they spake both of God and Job some things that were not right; yet the general doctrines they laid down, spake the pious sense of the patriarchal age. St. Paul quoted ver. 13 for canonical scripture, and as the command, ver. 17, "Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty," is no doubt binding on us, so these promises here are to be received and applied as Divine promises; and we may, through patience and comfort of this part of scripture, have hope.

Let us therefore give diligence to make sure our interest in these promises, view the particulars of them, and take the comfort of them.

1. As afflictions and troubles recur, supports and deliverances shall be graciously repeated. As long as we are in this world, we must expect a succession of troubles, but out of them all will God deliver those that are his, 2 Tim. 3. 11; Ps. 34. 19. Former deliverances are earnest of further deliverances, Prov. 19. 19, not, as among men, excuses from them.

2. That whatever troubles good men may be in, they shall do them no real harm; the sting shall be taken out; they may hiss, they cannot hurt, Ps. 91. 10. Being kept from sin, they are kept from the evil of every trouble.

3. In desolating judgments they shall be taken under special protection.

Redemption is an act of special favour, and it notes a special distinction by favour.

We are not to take this as if God would deliver all his people from pestilence, famine, and the sword. Many precious servants of his have fallen by these calamities, but the Lord knows how to distinguish his when sword and famine do not. If the servants of Christ are not delivered from these troubles, they are delivered by them, and while overcome by one trouble, they conquer all!—(15.)

4. Whatever is maliciously said against them shall not hurt them. The best cannot secure themselves from reproach and false accusation. From these a man cannot hide himself, but God can hide him, so that the most malicious slanders shall not disturb his peace, or blemish his reputation. And the remainder of wrath God can and does restrain, for it is owing to the hold he has of the consciences of bad men, that the scourge of the tongue is not the ruin of all the comforts of good men in this world.

5. That they shall have a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from hope and confidence in God, even in the worst of times. When dangers are most threatening, they shall be easy, believing themselves safe; not so as to despise any of God's chastenings, or to make light of his judgments, but so as to triumph in God, and his power and goodness, and therein to triumph over the world and all its grievances; to be not only easy, but cheerful and joyful in tribulation. Blessed Paul laughed at destruction, when he said, O death, where is thy sting? when he defied all the calamities of this present time to separate from the love of God, Rom. 8.35; see Isa. 37.22.

6. That, being at peace with God, there shall be a covenant of friendship between them and the whole creation. While man is at enmity with his Maker, the inferior creatures are at war with him; but a reconciled God reconciles all things. Our covenant with God is a covenant with all the creatures, that they shall do us no hurt, but be ready to do us good.

7. That their houses and families shall be comfortable to them. Peace and piety in the family will make it so. God will provide a settlement for his people; mean, perhaps, and movable; a cottage, but a quiet habitation. Their families shall be taken under the special protection of the Divine Providence, and shall prosper as far as is for their good. They shall be assured of peace, and of the continuance

of it. Providence may change, but the promise cannot. They shall have wisdom to govern their families aright, and to look well to the ways of their household; masters of families must have a watchful eye over what they have, and what their servants do. They shall have grace to manage the concerns of their families after a godly sort, and not to sin in the management. They shall call their servants to account, without passion, pride, covetousness, or the like; they shall look into their affairs without discontent at what is, or distrust of what shall be. The greatest blessing, both in our employments, and in our enjoyments, is, to be kept from sin.

The words also may be considered as a promise to a good man with regard to absence from home. When he goes a journey at the call of Providence, he may leave all his concerns with the Lord whom he serves; for He will guide his steps, and suffer no evil to befall him, nor any plague to come nigh his dwelling. But to be too frequently or too long from home will produce a nameless train of evils.—(42.)

8. That their posterity should be numerous and prosperous. God has blessings in store for the seed of the faithful, which they shall have, if they do not forfeit them by their folly. It is a comfort to parents to see the prosperity, especially the spiritual prosperity, of their children; if they are truly good, they are truly great, how small a figure soever they make in the world.

9. That their death shall be seasonable, and they shall finish their course, at length, with joy and honour. That man lives long enough who has done his work, and is fit for another world. It is a mercy to be willing to die, to come cheerfully to the grave, and not to be forced thither, as he whose soul was required of him. To die seasonably, as the corn is cut and housed when it is fully ripe; not till then, but then not suffered to stand longer. Our times are in God's hand; it is well they are so, for he will take care that those who are his, die in the best time: however their death may seem to us untimely, it will be found not unseasonable. We are not authorized to expect great wealth, long life, flourishing families, or exemption from tribulation; but we are assured that all will be ordered for the believer for the best.

In the last verse, he recommends those promises to Job, as faithful sayings, which he might be confident of the truth of. We

have indeed received these things by tradition from our fathers, but we have not taken them upon trust; we have carefully searched them, have diligently studied them, and been confirmed in our belief of them, from our own observation and experience; also as well worthy of all acceptance. It is not enough to hear and know the truth, but we must improve it, and be made wiser and better by it. Know it for thyself, so the word is; with application to thy own case; not only, this is true, but, this is true concerning me. That which we thus hear and know for ourselves, we hear and know for our good. That is, indeed, a good sermon, which does us good.

Remark from what we have already seen in Job's history, that a suitableness of mind and heart under trial, is one of the highest attainments of faith. There is little or no exercise for faith when all things go well. When the Lord, in his providence, neither suffers our desires to be crossed, nor thwarts our wishes; then it is smooth sailing down the stream of life. But if God raiseth a storm; permits the enemy to send wave after wave, and seemingly stands aloof from our prayers, then still to hang on and trust God, when we cannot trace him; this is the patience of the saints. Blessed Saviour! how sweet it is to look to thee, the Author and Finisher of faith, in such moments! While we look to thee, what strength doth it impart! When they lose sight of thee, what poor creatures the best of thy servants are! Lord, give us to believe! help thou our unbelief!—(37.)

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1—7. *Job justifies his complaints.*

Job still justifies himself in his complaints. Displeased rather than convinced by the reasonings of Eliphaz, he replies by wishing that his miseries might be impartially balanced against his complaints. In addition to outward troubles, the inward sense of God's wrath exhausted all his courage and resolution, and almost drove him to distraction. Doubtless this was the effect of Satan's temptations, who endeavoured to drive him to blasphemy. The Lord withheld from him all sensible comfort, leaving him in darkness and dismay. In this Job was a type of Christ, when agonizing in the garden, and when upon the cross he exclaimed, "My God! my God! why hast

thou forsaken me?" The apprehension or sense of the wrath of God, is harder to bear than any outward afflictions; and but few, even pious men, have wisdom and tenderness to deal properly with such as are thus overwhelmed. What then did the Saviour endure in the garden and on the cross, when he bare our sins, and his soul was made a sacrifice to Divine justice for us! And what will sinners have to endure in the regions of darkness and despair, who neglect such great salvation!

Trouble of mind is the sorest trouble: a wounded spirit who can bear? Whatever burden of affliction, in body or estate, God is pleased to lay upon us, we may well submit to it as long as he continues to us the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences; but if either of these is disturbed, our case is very pitiable. The way to prevent God's fiery darts of trouble, is, with the shield of faith to quench Satan's fiery darts of temptation. Observe, he calls them the arrows of the Almighty. It is an instance of the power of God, that he can with his arrows reach the soul. He that made it, can make his sword to approach it.

Job reflects upon his friends for their severe censures; now that he was utterly deprived of all comforts, he would not have the sense of an ox or a wild ass, if he did not give vent to his grief. He complains he had nothing now offered him for his relief that was proper, nothing to revive and cheer his spirits; what they had afforded, was in itself tasteless, loathsome, and burdensome.

Ver. 8—13. *Job wishes for death.*

Job had desired death as the happy period of his miseries. For this, Eliphaz had reproved him, but he asks it again with more vehemence than before. He seemed to think God could bestow on him no greater favour than instant death. It was very rash to speak thus of God destroying him. Who, for one hour, could endure the wrath of the Almighty, if he let loose his hand against him? But though Job was extremely desirous of death, yet he did not offer to take away his own life. How uneasy soever the soul's confinement in the body may be, it must wait for a fair discharge. It was his sin, so passionately to desire his own death; and offering up that desire to God, made it no better; we ought not to ask any thing of God, but what we can ask in faith, and we cannot ask any thing in

faith but what is agreeable to the will of God. Let grace make us willing to part with life whenever God calls. But it is great presumption to dare the Almighty, and to say, Let him not spare; for, are we stronger than he? 1 Cor. 10. 22. We are much indebted to sparing mercy, it is bad indeed with us when we are weary of that. Let us rather say with David, O spare me a little.

Job grounds his comfort upon the testimony of his conscience, that he had been faithful to his profession of religion, and in some degree serviceable to the glory of God in his generation. Let us never conceal God's word; but on all occasions communicate his knowledge for the good of others. He justifies himself in this extreme desire of death, from the deplorable condition he was now in, refuses to be comforted, and very ingeniously, yet perversely, argues against the encouragements that were given him. Disconsolate spirits will reason strangely against themselves. In answer to the pleasing prospects Eliphaz had flattered him with, he here intimates, that he had no reason to expect any such thing, and that he had no reason to desire any such thing. Those who, through grace, are ready for another world, cannot see much to invite their stay in this world. If it be God's will, we may do him more service, and may be riper for heaven, otherwise, what can we propose to ourselves in desiring to tarry here? We have already seen the best of this world, but we are not sure that we have seen the worst of it. He had no strength left, which could inspire a hope that his afflictions would end except in death. If he had the strength of stones or brass, his sufferings would soon wear it out; yet his understanding was continued, and his wisdom was not quite driven from him. Pious persons, in seasons of great distress, will find a strong propensity to such thoughts—the influence of a higher principle does not exclude it, but gives victory in this painful conflict. Surely we may find something better to request of God than deliverance from present pain.

“Is not my help in me?” Those who have grace in them, who have the evidence of it, and have it in exercise, have wisdom in them, which will be their help in the worst of times.

Ver. 14—21. *Job reproves his friends as unkind.*

In his prosperity Job had formed great expectations from his friends, and in his

calamity he hoped for consolation from their visit, but had been disappointed. This disappointment he illustrates by the failing of brooks in summer. His expectations from them he compares to the expectation which the weary thirsty travellers have, of finding water in the summer where they have often seen it in great abundance in the winter. The troops of Tema and Sheba, whose road lay through the deserts of Arabia, looked and waited for a supply of water from those brooks. Where we have met with relief and comfort, we are apt to expect it again; and yet it does not follow. The disappointment of his expectation is here compared to the confusion which seizes travellers, when they find heaps of sand where they expected floods of water. In the winter, when they were not thirsty, there was water enough; every one will applaud and admire those that are full and in prosperity: but in the heat of summer, when they needed water, then it failed them; it was consumed, it was turned aside. When those who are rich and high, are sunk and impoverished, and stand in need of comfort, then those who before gathered about them stand aloof; and those who before commended them, are forward to run them down. Thus they who raise their expectations from the creature, will find it fail when it should help them; whereas they who make God their confidence, have help in the time of need, Heb. 4. 16. They that make gold their hope, sooner or later will be ashamed of it, and of their confidence in it, Ezek. 7. 19, and the greater their confidence was, the greater their shame will be. We prepare confusion for ourselves by our vain hopes: the reeds break under us, because we lean upon them.

It is our wisdom to cease from man; we cannot expect too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. It is no new thing even for brethren to deal deceitfully, Jer. 9. 4, 5; Mic. 7. 5, let us therefore put our confidence in the Rock of ages, not in broken reeds; in the Fountain of life, not in broken cisterns. God will outdo our hopes as much as men come short of them.

The application is very close. For now ye are nothing. Whatever complacency we may take, or whatever confidence we may put in creatures, one time or other we shall say of them, Now ye are nothing. When Job was in prosperity,

his friends were something to him. he took complacency in them and their society; but "Now ye are nothing, now I can find no comfort but in God." It were well for us, if we had always such convictions of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to make us happy, as we have had, or shall have, on a sick-bed, a death-bed, or in trouble of conscience.

Ver. 22—30. *Job continues to reprove his friends as unkind.*

Job goes on to upbraid his friends with their hard usage. He here appeals to themselves concerning several things which tended both to justify him, and condemn them. He urges,

1. Though he was necessitous, yet he was not craving, nor burdensome to his friends. A good man, when troubled himself, is afraid of being troublesome to his friends. Job's not asking their help, did not excuse them from offering it when he needed it: but it very much aggravated their unkindness, when he desired no more from them than a good look, and a good word, and yet could not obtain them. It often happens that from man, even when we expect little, we have less, but from God, even when we expect much, we have more, Eph. 3. 20.

2. Though he differed in opinion from them, yet he was ready to yield to conviction as soon as it was made to appear that he was in error. It is the undoubted character of every honest man, that he is truly desirous to have his mistakes rectified, and to be made to understand wherein he has erred. Right words, when they appear to him to be so, though contrary to his former sentiments, are both forcible and acceptable.

3. Though he had been indeed in fault, yet they ought not to have given him such hard usage. Shall a man's spiritual state be judged of by some rash and hasty words, which trouble exerts from him? Two things aggravated their unkind treatment of him. First. That they took advantage of his weakness, and the helpless condition he was in. Let those who overwhelm and overpower them that upon any account may be looked upon as fatherless, know that therein they not only put off the compassions of man, but fight against the compassions of God, who is, and will be a Father of the fatherless, and a Helper of the helpless. Second. That they made pretence of kindness. When they came to see and to mourn with him, he thought

that the more bitter his complaints were, the more they would endeavour to comfort him. But this freedom of speech, which their professions of concern for him made him use, had exposed him to their censures. Thus when our hearts are hot within us, what is ill done we are apt to misrepresent, as if done designedly.

4. Though he had let fall some passionate expressions, yet, he was in the right. His righteousness he holds fast, and will not let it go. He here appeals to what they saw in him and heard from him. Let your own eyes convince you that my condition is very sad, and that I do not make it worse than it is. He was not conscious there had been such iniquity in his tongue as they supposed. But it is best to commit our characters to Him who keeps our souls, and to appeal to that day when he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts, and then shall every upright believer have praise of God,

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1—6. *Job complains of his continual troubles.*

Job here excuses what he could not justify—his desire of death. He argues, From the general condition of man upon earth. He is of few days, and full of trouble. Observe man's present place: he is upon earth. This speaks his inferiority: it also speaks God's mercy to him: he is yet *upon* the earth, not under it; on earth, not in hell. Is there not a time appointed for his abode here? Yes, certainly, and the appointment is made by Him that made us and set us here. We are not to be on this earth always, nor long, but for a certain time, which is determined by Him in whose hand our times are. We are governed by the wise, holy, and sovereign counsel of God. During that continuance, man's life is a warfare, and as the days of an hireling. We are to look upon ourselves in this world as soldiers exposed to hardship, and in the midst of enemies; we must serve and be under command; and when our warfare is accomplished, be dismissed with shame or honour, according to what we have done. As day-labourers, that have the work of the day to do in its day, and must make up their account at night. Also from his own condition at this time, Job argues that he had as much reason, he thought, to wish for death, as a poor

servant that is tired with his work, has to wish for the shadows of the evening, when he shall go to rest. The darkness of the night is as welcome to the labourer, as the light of the morning is to the watchman, Ps. 130. 6. God has provided for the repose of labourers, and no wonder that they desire it. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, Eccl. 5. 12. No pleasure more grateful, more relishing to the luxurious, than rest is to the laborious; nor can any rich man take so much satisfaction in the receipt of his wealth, as the hireling in his day's wages. The comparison is plain; hear his complaint:

1. His days were useless, and had long been so. It much increases the affliction of sickness and age to a good man, that he is thereby forced from his usefulness. He insists not so much that they are days in which he has no pleasure, as that they are days in which he does no good; on that account, they are months of vanity: but when we are disabled to work for God, if we sit still quietly for him, we shall be accepted.

2. His nights were restless. Be the trouble what it will, sleep gives some intermission to the cares, and pains, that afflict us; but Job's nights were wearisome; instead of taking rest, he did but tire himself more with tussling to and fro until morning. These wearisome nights were appointed to him. Whatever is, at any time, grievous to us, it is good to see it appointed for us, that we may acquiesce in it, not only as unavoidable, but as designed for some holy end. When we have comfortable nights, we must see them also appointed to us, and be thankful for them.

3. His body was noisome, so evil was the disease which cleaved to him. See what vile bodies we have, and what little reason we have to pamper, or be proud of them; fond as we are of them now, the time may come when we may loathe them.

4. His life was hastening apace. It is applicable to life in general; our days are like a weaver's shuttle, thrown rapidly from one side of the web to the other, and then back again, until, at length, it is quite exhausted of the thread it carried, and then we cut off, like a weaver, our life, Isa. 38. 12. Time hastens on apace, the motion of it cannot be stopped, and, when it is past, it cannot be recalled. While we are living, every day, like the shuttle, leaves a thread behind it; many weave the spider's web, which will fail

them, ch. 8. 14. But if, while we live, we live unto the Lord, abounding in works of faith, and labours of love, we shall have the benefit of them when our work comes to be reviewed; for every man shall reap as he sowed, and wear as he wove, Gal. 6. 7.

The true believer, by the grace of God, fights the good fight of faith, and performs his appointed service; and when conflicting with sore temptations or afflictions, he may desire the promised rest and welcome the shadows of the evening of life, the assaults of sickness, and the inroads of old age; but, like a valiant soldier, or a patient labourer, he will not impatiently desire release.

6. My days move lightly for want of woof; They are spent to the extremity of the thread.
Fry.

Ver. 7—16. *Job expostulates with God.*

We must not here learn how to speak to God; but if God be not extreme to mark what his people say amiss, let us also make the best of it.

Job here represents himself as a dying man, surely and speedily dying. His life was vain and empty, soon gone, and past recall. Observe the pious reflections Job makes upon his own life and death. Such plain truths as to the shortness and vanity of life, and the certainty of death, do us good, when we think and speak of them with application to ourselves. Let us consider then, that we must shortly take our leave of all the things which are seen, which are temporal; let us therefore live by that faith which is the substance and evidence of things not seen—That we must then remove to an invisible world: go to converse with the things that are not seen, that are eternal—That God can in a moment put an end to our lives, and send us to another world; he takes away our breath, and we die—That when we are removed to another world, we never return to this. Dying is done but once, and therefore it had need be well done. An error there, is past retrieve.

Other clouds arise, but the same cloud never returns: so a new generation of men is raised up, but the former generation vanishes away. When we see a cloud which looks great, of a sudden dispersed and disappearing, let us say, Just such a thing is the life of man; it is a vapour that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away. He shall return no more to his house, to the possession and enjoyment of it, to the business and

delights of it: others will take possession, till they also resign to another generation. Glorified saints shall return no more to the cares, burdens, and sorrows of their house; nor condemned sinners to the gaieties and pleasures of their house. It concerns us to secure a better place when we die; for this will no more own us.

From these reasons Job might have drawn a better conclusion than this, "I will complain." Holy David, when meditating on the frailty of human life, made a far better use of it, Ps. 39. 9, I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; but Job makes his complaint, as if he could not die in peace until he had given vent to his passion. When we have but a few breaths to draw, we should spend them in the holy, gracious breathings of faith and prayer; not in the noisome, noxious breathings of sin and corruption. The Lord is here addressed, though not mentioned. Job inquires whether it is needful, that like a tempestuous ocean, or a devouring monster, he should be kept from mischief by such vast afflictions.

Job also here represents himself as a sorely distempered man; he complains as if God laid upon him more than was meet. We are very apt, when in affliction, to complain of God and his providence; but we are never in heaviness unless there is need, nor beyond the just measure.

Sleep will, for a time, give some relief, but it was not so with poor Job; if asleep, he was disturbed with frightful dreams, and when they awoke him, still he was haunted with dreadful visions. This made the night so unwelcome and wearisome to him. God can, when he pleases, meet us with terror where we promise ourselves ease and repose. Nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves, and, as we have often contracted guilt, by the roivings of an unsanctified fancy, he can likewise, by the power of our own imagination, create us much grief, and make that our punishment, which has often been our sin. In Job's dreams we have reason to think Satan had a hand, Satan, who delights to terrify those whom it is out of his power to destroy; but Job mistook Satan's representations for the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him. We have reason to pray that our dreams may neither defile nor disquiet us, neither tempt us to sin, nor torment us with fear; that He who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, may keep us

when we slumber and sleep; that the devil may not then do us mischief, either as an insinuating serpent, or as a roaring lion; and to bless God if we lie down, and our sleep is sweet.

He covets to rest in his grave, that bed where there are no tossings to and fro, nor any frightful dreams: My days are vanity, empty of solid comfort, exposed to real griefs; and I would not be for ever tied to such uncertainty. A good man would not, if he might, live always in this world, though it smile upon him; for it is a world of sin and temptation, and he has a better world in prospect. He was fond of death; his judgment, he thought, but really it was his passion, chose any death rather than such a life as this. Doubtless, this was Job's infirmity; for though a good man would choose strangling and death rather than sin, as the martyrs did; yet he will be content to live as long as pleases God, and not choose them rather than life; because life is our opportunity of glorifying God, and being prepared for heaven.

12. Am I a savage beast or a dragon, that thou shouldst appoint a keeper over me?—*Good.*

Ver. 17—21. *Job begs release from miseries.*

Job here reasons with God concerning his dealings with man in general; What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? We mistake God, and the nature of his providence, if we think it any lessening to him, to take notice of the meanest of his creatures. But that such a worm of the earth as man is, should be the darling and favourite of Heaven, is what we have reason for ever to admire.

Also concerning God's dealings with him in particular. Job here aggravates his afflictions. He complains, Lord, wilt not thou give me some respite, some breathing time? ch. 9. 18.

In the midst of this discourse, Job seems to have lifted up his thoughts to God, and mingled some faith and hope with his despondency and fretfulness. He desired the Lord to remember how fleeting this life was at best, and either to abate his anguish, or release him from it, as he had no hope of seeing comfort here.

Observe the concern he is in about his sins. The best men have sin to complain of, and the better they are, the more they will complain of it. God is "the Preserver" of our lives, and the Saviour of the souls of all that believe, but probably Job meant "the Observer of men," whose

are upon the ways and hearts of all men. We can conceal nothing from him: as plead guilty before his throne of grace, that we may not be condemned at his judgment-seat.

He ingenuously owns himself guilty before God; I have sinned. God had said of him, that he was a perfect and an upright man; yet he says of himself, I have sinned. Those may be upright, who yet are not sinless; and accepted, through a Mediator, as evangelically perfect. Job maintained, against his friends, that he was not a hypocrite, not a wicked man, and yet owns to his God, that he had sinned. If we have been kept from gross acts of sin, it does not therefore follow that we are innocent. The best must acknowledge, before God, that they have sinned. When we are in affliction, it is seasonable to confess sin, as the procuring cause of our affliction. Penitent confessions would silence passionate complaints.

He seriously inquires how he might be at peace with God. Are we convinced that we have sinned, and are we brought to own it? We cannot but conclude that something must be done, to prevent the fatal consequences. And if we are truly sensible of the danger, we shall be willing to take a pardon upon any terms; and therefore shall be inquisitive as to what we shall do, Mic. 6. 6, 7; what we shall do to God; not to satisfy the demands of his justice, that is done only by the Mediator, but according to the tenour of the gospel covenant. In making this inquiry, it is good to eye God as the Preserver or Saviour of men, not the destroyer. In our repentance, we must think of God, as one that delights not in the ruin of his creatures, but would rather they should return and live. "Thou art the Saviour of men; be my Saviour, for I cast myself upon thy mercy."

He earnestly begs for the forgiveness of his sins. The heat of his spirit made his complaints the more bitter, and made his prayers the more lively and importunate. Art not thou a God of infinite mercy, that art ready to forgive? Hast not thou wrought repentance in me? Why then dost thou not give me the pardon of my sin, and make me to hear the voice of that joy and gladness? He was assured that God was merciful, and that he could, consistently with his glory, pardon his transgressions and take away his iniquity, and he was very desirous of some token that

this favour was granted him. Surely he means more than barely the removing of his outward trouble, and is herein earnest for the return of God's favour, which he complained of the want of, ch. 6. 4. Lord, pardon my sins, and give me the comfort of that pardon, and then I can easily bear my afflictions, Matt. 9. 2. Isa. 33. 24. When the mercy of God pardons the transgression that is committed by us, the grace of God takes away the iniquity that reigns in us. Wherever God removes the guilt of sin, he breaks the power of sin.

To enforce his prayer for pardon, Job pleads the prospect he had of dying quickly. If my sins be not pardoned while I live, I am lost and undone for ever. The consideration that we must shortly die, and perhaps may die suddenly, should make us all most solicitous to get our sins pardoned, and our iniquity taken away.

How wretched is sinful man without the knowledge of the Saviour! Blessed be God for Jesus Christ. The atonement for sin is already made; but it behoves us to inquire what means we are to use to obtain an interest in it. If we wait upon him in the appointed way, the tokens of his love will, in due time, be vouchsafed; we may look forward to the hour of death with patient submission and joyful hope.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1—7. Bildad reproves Job.

Bildad reproves Job for what he had said. Job spake much to the purpose; but Bildad, like an eager, angry disputant, turns it all off with this, How long wilt thou speak these things? Men's meaning is not taken aright, and then they are gravely rebuked, as if they were evil doers.

Reproofs are often grounded upon mistakes. Many disfigure the opinions of others with ideas of their own, and then, presuming they mean thus, they dispute not against the real opinion of their opponents, but their own disguise.—(15.)

Even in religious controversies it is too common for men to treat each other with acrimony, and their arguments with contempt; to overlook what is evidently good, to make the worst of what is apparently faulty, and to charge horrible consequences upon very inoffensive tenets.

Bildad's discourse shows that he had not a favourable opinion of Job's character. Yet it was right to exhort Job, without delay to seek and pray unto God.

He justifies God in what he had done. But in doing this he needed not to have cast reflections upon Job's children. He is right, that God doth not pervert judgment. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen. 18. 25. If there should be unrighteousness with God, how shall he judge the world? Rom. 3. 5, 6. God is Almighty, and stands in awe of none. God is All-sufficient, and cannot be benefited by the favour of any. Yet Bildad is not fair in the application. Job readily owned that God did not pervert judgment; and yet it did not therefore follow that his children were cast-aways, or that they died for some great transgression. We and our children have sinned against God, and we ought to justify him in all he brings upon us and ours. Extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces; and, in our judgment of another's case, unless the contrary appears, we ought to take the favourable side, as our Saviour directs, Luke 13. 2, 4.

Bildad puts Job in hope, that if he were indeed upright, he should yet see a good issue of his present troubles. This may be taken, either as designed to prove Job a hypocrite, and a wicked man, though not by the greatness, yet by the continuance of his afflictions; or as designed to direct and encourage Job, that he might not thus run into despair; yet there might be hope, if he would take the right course. When we return to God in a way of duty, we have reason to hope that he will return to us in a way of mercy. Let not Job object that he had so little left. Though thy beginning should be ever so small, God's blessing shall multiply to a great increase. This is God's way of enriching the souls of his people with graces and comforts. The beginning is small, but the progress is to perfection. Dawning light grows to noon-day; a grain of seed to a great tree. Let us not therefore despise the day of small things, but hope for the day of great things.

Ver. 8—19. *Bildad urges that hypocrites are certainly to be destroyed.*

Bildad here discourses well of the sad catastrophe of hypocrites and evil-doers, and the fatal period of all their hopes and joys. He will not say with Eliphaz, that none who were righteous, were ever cut off thus, ch. 4. 7; yet he takes it for granted, that God, in the course of his

providence, does ordinarily bring wicked men, who seemed pious, and were prosperous, to shame and ruin in this world; and that, by making their prosperity short, he discovers their piety to be counterfeit. Whether this will certainly prove that all who are thus ruined have been hypocrites, he will not say, but rather suspects it.

He proves this truth of the destruction of the hopes and joys of hypocrites, by an appeal to antiquity, and the concurring sentiment and observation of wise and good men. He insists not on his own judgment, and that of his companions. He says they were not so near the fountain-head of Divine revelation, which then, for aught that appears, was conveyed by tradition, as the former age was; and therefore must inquire what they said. Blessed be God, now that we have the word of God in writing, and are directed to search that, we need not inquire of the former age; for, though we ourselves are but of yesterday, the word of God in the scripture is as nigh us as them, Rom. 10. 8: and it is the more sure word of prophecy, to which we must take heed. If we study and keep God's precepts, we may by them understand more than the ancients, Ps. 119. 99, 100. He adds that they did not live so long as they of the former age, to make observations upon the methods of Divine Providence, and therefore could not be such competent judges. The shortness of our lives is a great hinderance to the improvement of our knowledge; and so is the frailty and weakness of our bodies.

He refers to the testimony of the ancients, and to the knowledge which Job himself had of their sentiments. We may observe, that for the right understanding of Divine Providence, and unfolding of difficulties, it will be of use to compare the observations and experiences of former ages with the events of our own day; and, in order thereunto, to consult history, especially the sacred history; which is the most ancient, is infallibly true, and was written designedly for our learning. Also, they that would fetch knowledge from the former ages, must take pains in the search. And those words are most likely to reach to the hearts of the learners, that come from the hearts of the teachers. They teach best, that utter words out of their heart, that speak by experience, and not by rote, of spiritual and Divine things.

Bildad illustrates what he advanced of

the fading of the prosperity of the hypocrite, by various similitudes. A rush growing in fenny ground, looking very green, but withering in dry weather, represents the hypocrite's profession, maintained only in times of prosperity. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of men's hypocrisy, and of the vain hopes with which they flatter and deceive themselves in their hypocrisy. Men would not be hypocrites, if they did not forget that the God with whom they have to do searches the heart, and requires truth there. Hypocrites could have no hope, if they did not forget that God is righteous, and will not be mocked. The hope of hypocrites is a great cheat on themselves; though it may flourish a while, it will certainly perish at last, and they with it.

The spider's web, spun with great ingenuity, well fitted to answer the purposes of the insect, but easily swept away, represents his pretensions to religion without the grace of God in his heart, the vanity of his dependence, and of his endeavours to retain his prosperity, when God arises to execute judgment. The hope of the hypocrite is the creature of his own fancy, and arises merely from a conceit of his own merit and sufficiency. There is a great deal of difference between the work of the bee and that of the spider. A diligent christian, like the laborious bee, fetches in all his comfort from the heavenly dews of God's word; but the hypocrite, like the subtle spider, weaves his out of a false opinion of his own concerning God, as if he were altogether such a one as himself. So does a carnal worldling hug himself in his outward prosperity; he prides himself in that as his palace, and fortifies himself in it as his castle, and makes use of it as the spider of her web, to ensnare those he has a mind to prey upon. So does a formal professor; he flatters himself in his own eyes, doubts not of his salvation, is secure, and cheats the world with his vain confidences.

The flourishing of the tree, planted in the garden, striking root even to the rock, yet after a time cut down and thrown aside, while another is planted in its place, represents wicked men, when they seem most firmly established, suddenly thrown down and forgotten, while others come in their places, whose joy in wicked ways is equally unstable. The way of worldlings is their folly, and yet there is a race of them that approve their

saying, Ps. 49. 13. Thus men deceive themselves, and are deceived by Satan; yet every object in nature seems to warn them not to lean on such failing supports, not to adopt such self-devised expedients, nor to rejoice in such perishing comforts. This doctrine of the vanity of a hypocrite's confidence, or the prosperity of a wicked man, is sound; but if confined to the present world, it has many exceptions, and was not applicable to the case of Job.

10. Bildad is about to quote a traditionary saying of these ancients, and we shall find that the subsequent speeches of these friends, with which they urge Job, are for the most part filled with the "sayings" of antiquity, "maxims," or "parables."—*Fry.* The original of "words," implies short, interrupted, apophthegmatic sayings, maxims, or proverbs, which constitute the common form in which the ethics of the east are communicated, even in the present day.—*Good.*

Ver. 20—22. *Bildad applies God's just dealing to Job.*

Bildad here assures Job, that as he was, so he should fare, and therefore they concluded, that as he fared, so he was.

God will not cast away an upright man; he may be cast down for a time, but he shall not be cast away for ever; if not in this world, yet in another, the mouth of the righteous shall be filled with rejoicing. Though their sun should set under a cloud, yet it shall rise again clear, never more to be clouded; though they go mourning to the grave, that shall not hinder their entrance into the joy of their Lord. It is true, that the enemies of the saints will be clothed with shame, when they see them crowned with honour. But it does not follow, that if Job were not restored to his former prosperity, he forfeited the character of a perfect man.

On the other hand, if he were a wicked man, and an evil doer, God would not help him, but leave him to perish. Here also it is true, that evil doers throw themselves out of God's protection, and forfeit his favour. He will not take the ungodly by the hand, so it is in the margin, will not have fellowship and communion with them; for what communion hath light with darkness? He will not lend them his hand to pull them out of the miseries, the eternal miseries, into which they have plunged themselves. They will stretch out their hand to him for help, but it will be too late, he will not take them by the hand. It is true, that they who make other things their refuge, will be disappointed. Sin brings ruin on persons and families. Yet to argue, that because

Job's family was sunk, and he himself, at present, seemed helpless, therefore he was an ungodly, wicked man, was neither just nor charitable, as long as there appeared no other evidence. Let us judge nothing before the time, but wait till the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, and the present difficulties of Providence be solved, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

The fallacy in these reasonings arose from Job's friends not distinguishing between the present state of trial and discipline, and the future state of final retribution. We must not judge of characters by the dispensations of Providence, and when we mention remarkable deaths we should not consider them as Divine judgments, nor decide upon the state of the soul, except upon the most undeniable evidence of presumptuous wickedness. Waving such matters, we should exhort the afflicted, without delay, to seek the Lord by prayer, and encourage them with the prospect of returning comfort from the power and mercy of God. May we choose the portion, possess the confidence, bear the cross, and die the death of the righteous; and in the mean time be careful, neither to wound others by rash judgments, nor to distress ourselves needlessly about the opinions of our fellow-creatures.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1—13. *Job acknowledges God's justice, and speaks of his dominion.*

In this answer Job paid no regard to Bildad's severe reflections, but confined himself more to the point in hand. He declared that he did not doubt concerning the justice of God, when he denied himself to be a hypocrite, for how should man be just with God? Before him he pleaded guilty of innumerable transgressions; and if God should contend with him in judgment, he could not justify one out of a thousand of all the thoughts, words, and actions of his life; therefore he deserved worse than all his present sufferings, but this was common to the best of men.

Job lays this down for a truth—that man is unequal to encounter his Maker, either in dispute or combat. He proves it, by showing what a God he is, with whom we have to do. It is the greatest madness to think to contend with a God of infinite wisdom and power. Instead of cursing God, as Satan expected, he sets himself to celebrate his perfections and

wonderful works. Much as Job is taken up with his own miseries, when he has occasion to mention the wisdom and power of God, he forgets his complaints, and dwells with delight and eloquence upon that noble, useful subject.

Opposition, indeed, must be foolish as well as impious, against Him who is able to remove or destroy the earth in a moment—who can forbid the sun or stars to shine, or at once extinguish their fires; who arranges the constellations of the heavens and the seasons of the year as he pleases; in short, whose works cannot be numbered, or fully reckoned by man. In all these things God is ever present, though unperceived. He can take away children, wealth, health, or life, and none can hinder or call him to account.

Our finite understandings cannot fathom his counsels, apprehend his motions, or comprehend the measures he takes; we are therefore incompetent judges of God's proceedings, because we know not what he doeth, or what he designeth. God is not obliged to give us a reason of what he doeth. It will be time enough to know hereafter, when it will appear that all was done in infinite wisdom, and for the best.

God acts with a power which no creature can resist. He certainly breaks and crushes those that proudly help one another against him; proud men set themselves against God and his proceedings; in this opposition they join. If one enemy of God's kingdom fall under his judgment, the rest come proudly to help, and think to deliver out of his hand; but in vain, unless he pleases to withdraw his anger. Who knows the power of God's anger? They who think they have strength enough to help others, will not be able to help themselves against it!

9. Aish, Chesil, Chimah, and Hadri. Most expositors follow the Greek version, in supposing these words to be names of stars, constellations, or parts of the heavens. That version, however, renders the terms differently in different places. In this sense the last term is not doubtful, the "concealed chambers," or "veiled parts of the south," designating those parts of the heavens which are never visible to most of the inhabitants of the northern hemisphere, but the existence of which is known from travellers. There is also considerable proof that the situation of what is designated by the first term is directly opposite—the circling or the north pole, the stars of which never set, but appear to move in a perpetual circle to those to whom the chambers of the south are concealed. The precise meaning of the remaining terms is more difficult: see note, ch. 38, 31, 32.

Ver. 14—21. *Job acknowledges that he is not able to contend with God.*

Job, we are to remember, is still righteous in his own eyes, ch. 32. 1, and this answer, though it beautifully sets forth the power and majesty of God, implies that the question between the afflicted and the Lord of providence, is a question of might, and not of right; and we begin to discover the evil fruits of pride, and of a self-righteous spirit. Job begins to manifest a disposition for which he is afterwards reprov'd, to condemn God that he may justify himself.—(25.)

What Job had said of man's utter inability to contend with God, he here applies to himself, and despairs of gaining his favour. He dares not dispute with God. No, let all flesh be silent before him. He dares not insist upon his own justification before God. Though to his friends he would not yield that he was a hypocrite and a wicked man, yet he would never plead his righteousness before God.

God knew him better than he knew himself, and therefore, he dare not put himself upon that issue, lest God charge that upon him which he did not discover in himself. Job therefore will cast himself upon God's mercy, and not think to come off by his own merit.

He had no reason to think that there was any thing in his prayers, to recommend them to the Divine acceptance; no worth or worthiness at all, to which to ascribe their success; it must be attributed purely to the grace and compassion of God, who gives gracious answers to our prayers, but not for our prayers.

His present miseries gave him a sensible conviction, that, in the ordering and disposing of men's outward condition in this world, God acts by sovereignty; that is, the best do not always fare best, nor the worst fare worst, in this life. God reserves the full and exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state.

Job knew so much of himself, that he durst not stand a trial. A good man, who knows the deceitfulness of his own heart, and has often discovered that amiss there, which had long lain undiscovered, is suspicious of more evil in himself than he is really conscious of, and therefore will by no means think of justifying himself before God. If we say, "We have no sin," we not only deceive ourselves, but we affront God; for we sin in saying so, and give the lie to the scripture, which has

concluded all under sin. In short, it is folly to contend with God, and our wisdom, as well as our duty, to submit to him, and throw ourselves at his feet.

But Job here, no doubt, spake unadvisedly with his lips; he reflected on God's goodness, and on his justice, in saying his affliction was without cause.

We may indeed maintain our integrity as believers before men, but it is often lost labour, except as by well doing we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Ver. 22—24. *Men's character not to be judged by their outward condition.*

Here Job touches briefly upon the main point now in dispute between him and his friends. They maintained that those who are righteous and good always prosper in this world, and that none but the wicked are in misery and distress; he asserted, on the contrary, that it is a common thing for the wicked to prosper, and the righteous to be greatly afflicted. But let this reconcile God's children to their troubles; they are but trials designed for their honour and benefit. Yet there is too much passion in what Job here says, for God doth not afflict willingly. When the spirit is heated, either with dispute or with discontent, we have need to set a watch before the door of our lips, especially in speaking of Divine things.

Ver. 25—35. *Job complains of his troubles, and the confusion he was in.*

Job renews his complaints with the same conflict of contending principles. He regarded his life as come to a wretched end with speed greater than the messenger of important tidings, the swiftest ships, or the eagle hastening to its prey.

How swift the motion of time is! it is always upon the wing, hastening to its period; it stays for no man. What little need have we of pastimes, and what great need to redeem time, when time runs on so fast towards eternity, which comes as time goes! How vain the enjoyments of time are, which we may be quite deprived of while yet time continues! Our day may be longer than the sunshine of our prosperity; and when that is gone, it is as if it had not been. The remembrance of having done our duty will be pleasing afterward; so will not the remembrance of having got largely of worldly wealth, when it is all lost and gone.

He would fain forget his complaints, and comfort himself, but he found he could not do it. It is easier, in such a

case, to know what temper we should be in, than to get into that temper, and keep in it. It is easy to preach patience to those that are in trouble, and to tell them they must forget their complaints, and comfort themselves; but it is not so soon done as said.

His complaint of God as implacable and inexorable, was the language of his corruption. He knew better things, and, at another time, would have been far from harbouring such hard thoughts of God. As he was indeed a sinner, he was alarmed lest God should finally reject him. It would be labour in vain to vindicate his character, for God would detect his secret iniquities. The discovery of his former sins, and the defects of his present obedience, would show him to be as an unclean thing, and his very righteousness as filthy rags. He speaks as if he despaired of obtaining from God any relief or redress, though he should produce ever so good proofs of his integrity. With men it is often labour in vain for the most innocent to go about to clear themselves; but it is not so in our dealings with God, to whom it was never in vain to commit a righteous cause.

There was nothing to be attempted in so unequal a contest. There was no days-man or umpire to decide on the merits of the cause; as the case now stood, it were as well for him to hold his peace. But there is a Mediator, a Days-man, for us, of God's own appointment; his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, who hath purchased peace for us with the blood of his cross, who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. If we trust in his name, our iniquities will be buried in the depths of the sea, we shall be washed from all our filthiness, and made whiter than snow, so that none can again lay anything to our charge; we shall be clothed with the robes of righteousness and salvation, adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit, and presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. May we well learn the difference between justifying ourselves, and being thus justified by God himself.

From all this let us take occasion, 1. To stand in awe of God, and to fear the power of his wrath. If good men have been put into such consternation by it,

where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 2. To pity those that are wounded in spirit, and to pray earnestly for them, because in that condition they know not how to pray for themselves. 3. Carefully to keep up good thoughts of God in our minds, for hard thoughts of him are the inlets of much mischief. 4. To bless God that we are not in such a desolate condition as poor Job, but that we walk in the light of the Lord. Let us rejoice therein, but rejoice with trembling.

We may be thankful if we have not known these waves of temptation, but we shall then scarcely know how to sympathize with those who are conflicting with them; let us then fear speaking to the grief of those who are ready to despair. And let the tempest-tossed soul consider Job, and notice that others have passed this dreadful gulf, and though they found it indeed hard to believe that God would hear or deliver them, yet he rebuked the storm, and brought them to the desired haven. Look to Jesus, who, though free from sin, once suffered, being tempted, that he might be able to succour such as are tempted. Resist the devil, steadfast in the faith; give not place to hard thoughts of God, or desperate conclusions about thyself. Come to Him who invites the weary and heavy laden; who hath promised in nowise to cast them out. Plead guilty; cast thyself upon unmerited mercy, without referring at all to thy former experience or character. Acknowledge that thy sufferings are less than thy sins have deserved. Cry for faith, for patience, for inward support, and wait thus at mercy's gate. Ere long the tempter shall be rebuked. Thou shalt yet sing, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me, Is. 12. 1. How happy is the believer, even in such trying circumstances, compared with those prosperous sinners of whom it shall be said, Thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented!

25. The rapidity with which couriers traversed the sandy deserts of the east is very great, when mounted on the desert camel, which is a peculiarly swift species of that animal, and outstrips the fastest horse. The camel will travel more than a hundred miles in the twenty-four hours, for many days together, and an Arab rider will sometimes go for two or three days without food, or having only a handful of dates. Camels are called "ships of the desert" in the figurative language of the east, and probably are here referred to.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1-7. *Job complains of the hardships he suffered.*

Job, being weary of his life, resolves to complain, but he will leave his complaint upon himself: he would not charge God with unrighteousness. Here is a prayer, That he might be delivered from the sting of his afflictions, which is sin; Do not condemn me, do not separate me for ever from thee. Though I lie under the cross, let me not lie under the curse; though I smart by the rod of a Father, let me not be cut off by the sword of a Judge. Thou dost correct me, but O do not condemn me! It is the comfort of those who are in Christ Jesus, that, though they are in affliction, there is no condemnation to them, Rom. 8. 1. Nay, they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor. 11. 32. Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me. When God afflicts us, he contends with us; when he contends with us, there is always a reason. He is never angry without a cause; and it is desirable to know the reason, that we may repent of, mortify, and forsake the sin for which God has a controversy with us: in inquiring it out, let conscience have leave to do its office, and to deal faithfully with us.

But there is a peevish expostulation with God concerning his dealings with him. Now Job speaks in the bitterness of his soul indeed, not without some reflections upon the righteousness of his God. As afflictions may speedily render us weary of life, how needful is it to have our treasure in heaven, and to be prepared for death! But when we speak in the bitterness of our souls, we increase guilt and vexation. Let us now harbour no hard thoughts of God, because we shall hereafter see there was no cause for them.

Job is sure that God does not discover things, nor judge of them as men do. God sees every thing truly, his sight cannot be deceived, for he tries the heart, and is a witness to the thoughts and intents of that. Eyes of flesh discover things gradually, and when we gain the sight of one thing we lose the sight of another, but God sees every thing at one view. Eyes of flesh are soon tired, but the Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor does his sight ever decay. God sees not as man sees; that is, he does not judge as man judges, at the best as the thing appears, rather than as it is, and too often

according to affections, passions, prejudices, and interest. Men discover secret things by search and comparing evidence, but God needs not any of these ways of discovery; he sees not as man sees. Men grow wiser by experience; but it is not so with God; to him nothing is past, nothing future, but every thing present. The days of time, by which the life of man is measured, are nothing to the years of eternity. Job therefore thinks it strange that God should continue him under the confinement of affliction, as if he must take time to inquire into his iniquity. He could not understand what the Lord meant by so afflicting him. He could appeal that he had not been a hypocrite or a wicked man. Yet if God was pleased to punish him, he knew it was in vain for him to contend.

Ver. 8-13. *Job pleads with God as his Maker.*

Job, in these verses, seems to expostulate with God, as if he only formed and preserved him for misery. God made us, not we ourselves. His hands have made and fashioned these bodies of ours, and every part of them; and they are fearfully and wonderfully made. The soul also, which animates the body, is his gift. He takes notice of both here. The admirable structure of human bodies, is an illustrious instance of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. What a pity is it that those bodies should be instruments of unrighteousness, which are capable of being temples of the Holy Ghost! But the soul is the life, the soul is the man, and this is the gift of God. Thou hast granted me life, breathed into me the breath of life, without which the body would be but a worthless carcase. God is the Father of spirits: he made us living souls, and endued us with the powers of reason; he gave us life and favour, and life is a distinguishing favour, that puts us into a capacity of receiving other favours.

God maintains us; having lighted the lamp of life, he continually supplies it. He pleads with God, Thou madest me, and knowest my strength; wilt thou then suffer me to be pressed above measure? Was I preserved only to endure these calamities? If we plead with ourselves as an inducement to duty, God made me and maintains me, and therefore I will serve him and submit to him, we may plead it with God as an argument for mercy; Thou hast made me, do thou now make me; I am thine, save me. When God changes

his way, though we cannot account for it, we are bound to believe there are good reasons for it, which will be manifested shortly.

Ver. 14—22. *He complains of God's severity, and comforts himself that death will put an end to all his troubles.*

Job did not deny that as a sinner he deserved his sufferings; but he thought that justice was executed upon him with peculiar rigour; that every sin was noticed, that God would not acquit him from his iniquity, or deal with him according to that covenant of mercy of which other believers enjoyed the benefit. If I do but take one false step, I shall be sure to hear of it. Conscience will be sure to upbraid me, and to tell me, that this is to punish me. If God should thus mark iniquities, we are undone; but he does not thus mark them. Though we sin, God does not deal in extremity with us. The gloom, unbelief, and hard thoughts of God here discernible, were as much to be ascribed to Satan's inward temptations, and Job's anguish of soul, under the sense of God's displeasure, as to his outward trials, and remaining depravity. He now, more directly than before, expostulated with God for giving him his being, and not cutting him off from his birth, seeing that he seemed only reserved to suffer misery.

The wisdom, power, and goodness of God, displayed in the wonderful formation of our bodies; in giving us reasonable and immortal souls, and in all the mercies of our infancy, childhood, and riper years, demand our admiring, grateful praise; yet in a gloomy hour, when corruption prevails, Satan can tempt even a believer to admit the thought that God created and preserved him only to make him miserable! But all man's miseries are from his own wickedness; whatever may be hid in the counsels of God, none shall perish but the wilfully and finally impenitent. Our Creator, become in Christ our Redeemer also, will not destroy the work of his own hands, in any humble believer; but will renew him unto holiness, that he may enjoy eternal life.

Job entreated a little respite from his anguish, that he might prepare for his departure. The description that follows seems only intended for the grave, not to relate to the invisible world. He here describes the state of the dead, as to their bodies in the grave. Exactness is not to

be expected in the discourse of one who speaks in the bitterness of his spirit, yet Job certainly believed in a future state, and had a hope of happiness therein, though much clouded. In all Job's infirmities, he was never quite driven from his faith and hope in God.

If anguish on earth renders the grave a desirable refuge, what will be their condition who are condemned to the blackness of darkness for ever? Let every sinner seek deliverance from that dreadful state, and every believer be thankful to Jesus, who delivereth from the wrath to come. Having obtained the hope of heaven, we need not look with horror upon the dark and silent grave; though deep and dismal, it cannot hurt us. And if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, he will also quicken our mortal bodies, and raise them up, immortal and glorious. ✕

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1—6. *Zophar reproves Job for justifying himself.*

Zophar attacked Job with greater vehemence than Eliphaz and Bildad had done. He represented him as a man that loved to hear himself speak, though he could say nothing to the purpose—as a man that maintained falsehoods, and treated solid reasonings with contempt. He despaired of convincing Job, and therefore desired that God would interpose, and show him that he exacted less punishment than he deserved. So very confident is he that Job is in the wrong, that he desires God would immediately appear to silence and condemn him. We are commonly ready, with too much assurance, to interest God in our quarrels, and to conclude that if he would but speak, he would take our part, as Zophar here. We ought indeed to leave all controversies to be determined by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth; but they are not always right who are most forward to appeal to that judgment, and prejudge it against their antagonists.

Job never had pretended to a spotless perfection. He had indeed maintained that he was not a hypocrite, as they charged him; but to infer thence that he would not own himself a sinner, was an unfair insinuation. We ought to put the best construction on the words and actions

of our brethren that they will bear; but contenders are tempted to put the worst.

Ver. 7—12. *God's perfections and almighty power.*

Zophar here speaks very good things concerning God and his greatness and glory, concerning man and his vanity and folly: these duly considered, will have a powerful influence upon our submission to all the dispensations of the Divine Providence. Zophar here shows that God's nature infinitely exceeds the capacities of our understandings. We cannot know fully what God is, nor find out his work from the beginning to the end, Eccl. 3. 11. God is unsearchable. The ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, nor the spaces of his immensity measured: the depths of his wisdom cannot be fathomed, nor the reaches of his power bounded: the brightness of his glory can never be described, nor the treasures of his goodness. It is quite out of our reach to comprehend God's nature; such knowledge is too wonderful for us, Ps. 139. 6. We cannot fathom God's designs, nor find out the reasons of his proceedings; his judgments are a great deep. St. Paul attributes such immeasurable dimensions to the Divine love, as Zophar here attributes to the Divine wisdom, and yet recommends it to our acquaintance, Eph. 3. 18. That ye may know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ.

God is a sovereign Lord; if he that made, unmake, who can turn him away, alter his mind, or stay his hand, impede or impeach his proceedings?

God is a strict and just observer of the children of men, ver. 11. He knows vain men. We know little of him, but he knows us perfectly. He knows what the projects and hopes of vain men are, and can blast and defeat the workings of their foolish fancies. He takes knowledge of the vanity of men, their vain thoughts and vain words, and unsteadiness in that which is good. He observes bad men; he sees wickedness, though acted ever so secretly, and ever so artfully disguised. All the wickedness of the wicked is naked and open before the all-seeing eye of God; will he not then consider it? Yes, certainly he will, and will reckon for it, though for a time he seems to keep silence. These animated questions were intended to convince Job that the nature

of God is incomprehensible, and his judgments unsearchable.

See here what man is; and let him be humbled. God sees this concerning vain man, that he would be wise, would be thought so, though he is born like a wild ass's colt, so unteachable and untameable. See what man is; he is a vain creature; empty; so the word is. God made him full, but he emptied himself, impoverished himself, and now he is a creature that has nothing in him: he is a foolish creature, become like the beasts that perish, Ps. 49. 20; 73. 22, born like an ass's colt, not yet brought to any service. If ever he come to be good for any thing, it is owing to the grace of Christ, who once, in the day of his triumph, served himself of an ass's colt. He is a wilful ungovernable creature. Man thinks himself as much at liberty, and his own master, as the wild ass's colt does, that is used to the wilderness, Jer. 2. 24, eager to gratify his own appetites and passions. Yet he is a proud creature, and self-conceited. He would be wise, would be thought so, values himself upon the honour of wisdom, though he will not submit himself to the laws of wisdom. He would be wise, that is, he reaches after forbidden wisdom, and, like his first parents, aiming to be wise above what is written, loses the tree of life for the tree of knowledge. Now, is such a creature as this fit to contend with God, or call him to an account? Did we but better know God and ourselves, we should better know how to conduct ourselves towards God.

12. See ch. 39. 5—8.

Ver. 13—20. *Job assures Job of blessings if he repented.*

Here Zophar exhorts Job to repentance, and gives him encouragement, yet mixed with insinuations. If, instead of vindicating himself, he would, with due preparation of heart, humble himself, and stretch out his hands in prayer to God; if he repented of his wickedness, and did works meet for repentance; he might yet obtain forgiveness, and stand with confidence before God, who would clear his character, recover his health, and restore his prosperity, so that his misery should be forgotten, or only remembered as a cause for gratitude. Then his old age would shine with a brighter light of Divine favour and happiness, than either his youth or middle life. Secure of the Divine protection, and rejoicing in hope of future

blessedness, he might order all his affairs with comfort, and close his life with usefulness, while disappointment and ruin awaited the wicked. All this implied that worldly prosperity uniformly was the lot of the righteous, and that Job was to be deemed a hypocrite unless his prosperity was restored. They that truly turn to God, then begin to shine forth; their path is as the shining light which increases; the period of their day will be the perfection of it, and their evening to this world their morning to a better.

"Then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot;" that is, thou mayest come boldly to the throne of grace, and not with that terror and amazement expressed, ch. 9. 34. If our hearts condemn us not for hypocrisy and impenitency, then have we confidence in our approaches to God and expectations from him, 1 John 3. 21. If we are looked upon in the face of the Anointed, our faces that were dejected may be lifted up; that were polluted, now being washed with the blood of Christ, may be lifted up without spot. We may draw near in full assurance of faith, when we are sprinkled from an evil conscience, Heb. 10. 22.

Our real wisdom consists in seeking God's mercy and favour, in repenting and confessing our sins, accepting of his mercy and salvation, and praying earnestly to him for his sanctifying grace; that we may cast away our transgressions, and devote to him our bodies, souls, and substance, ruling our families in his faith and fear. Thus, being justified by faith, we may have peace with, and confidence before God, a quiet conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and the hope of heaven, with reliance on a kind Providence ordering all for our good, which will give comfort and steadfastness to our souls; we shall forget our misery as waters that pass away, and may at length lie down in the grave without fear and sorrow. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death, Prov. 14. 32.

18. "Thou shalt look around, thou shalt repose in confidence." The word here translated dig, means to penetrate, search.—*Good*. It is used ch. 39. 29. The Greek version is, "Out of sorrow and care, peace will shine upon thee."

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1-5. *Job reproves his friends.*

Job here upbraids his friends with the good opinion they seemed to have of their

own wisdom in comparison with him. He represents them as claiming the monopoly of wisdom; he speaks ironically. It is very foolish and sinful for any to speak and act confidently and imperiously. It is folly for us to think that there will be any irreparable loss when we are gone, or that we can be ill-spared, since God has the residue of the Spirit, and can raise up others, more fit than we are to do his work. When wise men and good men die, it is a comfort to think that wisdom and goodness shall not die with them.

Job claims a share in the gifts of wisdom. When tempted to be harsh in our censures of those we differ from, we ought to consider that they have understanding as well as we. He complains of contempt with which his friends treated him. We are very apt to call reproofs reproaches, and to think ourselves mocked when advised and admonished; this is our folly, yet we cannot but say there was colour for this charge; they came to comfort him, but they vexed him; gave him counsels and encouragements, but with no great opinion that either the one or the other would take effect; and therefore he thought they mocked him, and it added much to his grief. Nothing is more grievous to those that are fallen from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity, than to be trodden on, and insulted over, when they are down; and on this head they are too apt to be suspicious.

Observe what aggravated this grievance to him. They were his neighbours, his friends, his companions. They were professors of religion. It is sad that any who call upon God, should mock their brethren, Jam. 3. 9, 10, and it lies heavy on a good man to be thought ill of by those whom he thinks well of.

Also, observe what supported him under it. 1. That he had a God to go to, with whom he could lodge his appeal; some so understand these words, ver. 4, and so it agrees with ch. 16. 20. 2. That his case was not singular; it was of old the lot of good people to be despised and derided; we are not therefore to think it strange, 1 Pet. 4. 12, or hard, if it be our lot. He suspected the true cause of it to be, that they despised him who was fallen into poverty. It is the way of the world, we see instances of it daily. Even the just upright man, that is in his generation as a burning and shining light, if he enter into temptation, Ps. 73. 2, or

come under a cloud, is looked upon with contempt. Wealth without grace often makes men haughty, and careless of their poor neighbours.

Ver. 6—11. *He shows that the wicked often prosper.*

Job here appeals to facts. The most audacious robbers, and oppressors, and impious wretches are often prosperous. The matter was so plain that the whole creation could testify it. Yet this is not to be ascribed to fortune or chance; the Lord orders these things as he pleases. Worldly prosperity is of small value in his sight. He hath better things for his children, and commonly he gives carnal things abundantly into the hands of those, whose pride, luxury, and impiety are increased by them. The whole creation groans as in bondage to the lusts of men. Every creature declares the goodness of God, and the ungrateful abuse of man, testifying that this is a state of probation, not of retribution.

Any one may gather from the book of the creatures, that there is a wise Providence which guides and governs all these things by rules which we are neither acquainted with, nor are competent judges of. From God's sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, we should learn to acquiesce in all his disposals of the affairs of the children of men, though contrary to our measures.

He resolves all into the absolute proprietorship God has in all the creatures. All the creatures, and mankind particularly, derive their being from him, owe their being to him, depend upon him for the support of it, lie entirely at his disposal, and at his summons must resign their lives. All souls are his. The name Jehovah is used here, and it is the only time that we meet with it in all the discourses between Job and his friends. God was, in that age, more known by the name of Shaddai, the Almighty.

Those words, Doth not the ear try words, as the mouth tastes meat? may be taken either as the conclusion to the foregoing, or the preface to what follows. He demands from his friends a liberty to judge for himself of what they had said; nay, he seems to appeal to any impartial judgment; let the ear try the words on both sides. The faculties of our souls are formed as capable of discerning truth and falsehood, as our bodily senses are, of discriminating outward objects. Observation and experience should teach us wisdom.

Ver. 12—25. *Job confirms what had been said of the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of God.*

This is a noble discourse of Job concerning the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of God, in ordering all the affairs of the children of men, according to the counsel of his own will, which none dares gainsay, or can resist. It were well if wise and good men, who differ in their apprehensions about lesser things, would see it to be for their honour and comfort, and the edification of others, to dwell most upon the great things in which they agree. Here are no complaints, or reflections.

1. He asserts the unsearchable wisdom, and irresistible power of God. What is the wisdom of ancient men compared with the wisdom of the Ancient of days? It is but little that we know, and less that we can do; but God can do every thing, and no thought can be withholden from him. Happy they who have this God for their God, for they have infinite wisdom and strength engaged for them! Foolish and fruitless are all the attempts of men against him. There is no contending with the Divine Providence.

2. He gives an instance, for the proof of it, in nature, ver. 15. God has the command of the waters, binds them as in a garment, Prov. 30. 4, holds them in the hollow of his hand, Isa. 40. 12; and he can punish the children of men either by the want, or by the excess of them. See how many ways God has of contending with a sinful people, and taking from them abused, forfeited mercies; and how utterly unable we are to contend with him: In Noah's flood, that ever memorable instance of the Divine power, God, in wrath, sent the waters out, and they overturned the earth; but, in mercy, he withheld them, shut the windows of heaven, and the fountains of the great deep, and then, in a little time, they dried up.

3. He gives many instances of it in God's powerful management of the children of men, overruling all their counsels, and overcoming all their oppositions. What changes does God make with men, what turns does he give them; how easily, how surprisingly!

Having all strength and wisdom, he knows how to make use, even of those who are foolish and bad. The world is full of deceit. The deceivers make tools of the deceived, but the great God knows how to serve his own purposes by them, notwithstanding the weakness of the one,

and the wickedness of the other. God would not suffer the sin of the deceiver, nor the misery of the deceived, if he knew not how to set bounds to both, and to bring glory to himself out of both. The Lord God omnipotent thus reigns; otherwise there is so little wisdom, and so little honesty in the world, that it had all been in confusion and ruin long ago.

Job next descends to the particular instances of the wisdom and power of God in the revolutions of states and kingdoms. Those that were wise, are sometimes infatuated; and in that the hand of God must be acknowledged. His counsel stands, while all their devices are brought to naught, and their designs baffled. He makes the issue and event of their projects to be quite contrary to what they themselves intended, and so he makes them look like fools. Let not the wise man therefore glory in his wisdom, nor the ablest counsellors and judges be proud of their station, but humbly depend upon God for the continuance of their abilities.

Those that were high and in authority, are strangely brought down and impoverished; and it is God that humbles them. Kings are not exempt from God's jurisdiction. To us they are gods, but men to him, and subject to more than the common changes of human life.

Those that were strong, are weakened. No force can stand before Omnipotence. Those that were famed for eloquence, and intrusted with public business, are silenced. Or, they cannot speak what they intended, as Balaam, who blessed those whom he was called to curse. Those that were honoured and admired, fall into disgrace. He poureth contempt upon princes. He leaves them to themselves to do mean things, or alters the opinions of men concerning them. If princes dishonour God and despise him, if they do indignities to the people of God and trample upon them, they shall be lightly esteemed; God will pour contempt upon them, Ps. 107. 40.

That which was secret, and lay hid, is strangely brought to light. Plots closely laid are defeated, wickedness closely committed, and artfully concealed, is discovered, and the guilty brought to punishment. Kingdoms have their increase and fallings off, both are from God, ver. 23. He sometimes increases their numbers, and enlarges their bounds, so that they become formidable; but, after a while, they are destroyed and straitened,

made few and poor, and rendered despicable among their neighbours. They that were bold and courageous, and made nothing of dangers, are dispirited; and this also is the Lord's doing. They that were driving on their projects, are at a loss; they know not what they do, are unsteady in their counsels, and uncertain in their motions. God can soon bring the deepest politicians to their wit's end. Thus are the revolutions of kingdoms wonderfully brought about by an overruling Providence. Heaven and earth are shaken, but the Lord sits King for ever, and with him we look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

These important truths were suited to convince the disputants that they were out of their depth in attempting to assign the Lord's reason for afflicting Job; his ways are unsearchable, and his judgments past finding out.

Let us remark what beautiful illustrations there are in the word of God in confirmation of his sovereignty, and wisdom in that sovereignty; but the highest and infinitely the most important is, that the Lord Jesus was crucified by the malice of the Jews—who but the Lord could have known that this one event was the salvation of the world?—(37.)

They that exalt themselves against God's authority shall be cast off with indignation, but those who submit to his authority, and trust in his mercy, and yield themselves to his disposal, shall be taken care of by the way, and at the end graciously received with "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." May this be our choice, our conduct, our happiness!

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1—12. *Job reproves his friends' partiality.*

With self-preference, Job here declared that the discoveries of God's providential dealings with men, stated in the preceding chapter, were the result of his own observation; so that they might perceive he needed not their instruction. An improper boldness is to be perceived in the discourses of Job, for which Elihu afterwards reproved him. It is difficult for men to display superior talent without some appearance of ostentation; yet humility confers peculiar grace upon wisdom and knowledge. Those who enter into disputation, are exposed to the temptation to magnify themselves, and lower

their brethren, more than is fit, and therefore they ought to watch and pray against the workings of pride.

In all our troubles of mind and conscience we shall usually find men to be physicians of no value. When dismayed or distressed with the fear of wrath, the prevalence of sin, the force of temptation, or the weight of affliction, we should apply to the Physician of our souls, whose knowledge, power, and love are infinite; who never rejects any sincere application, never prescribes amiss, and never leaves any case uncured. To Him we may speak, and before him we may spread our case at all times, which is a peculiar comfort when we meet with harshness from man. To broken hearts and wounded consciences, all creatures, without Christ, are physicians of no value, on which one may spend all, and never be the better, but rather grow worse, Mark 5. 26.

Job begs his friends would be silent, and give him a patient hearing. It would be justice to him, to hear what he had to say. We should be willing and glad to hear what those have to say for themselves, whom we are tempted to have hard thoughts of. Many a man, if he could but be fairly heard, would be acquitted, even in the consciences of those that run him down. He endeavours to convince them of the wrong they did to God, while they pretended to plead for him.

Under pretence of justifying God in afflicting Job, they condemned him as a hypocrite and a bad man. The consideration of our own meanness and mortality should make us afraid of offending God, and is a good reason why we should not despise and trample upon our brethren. In such a dying world as this, considering how frail we are, and how short our time is, we may find something to do without reviling our brethren.

Job evidently speaks with a spirit much exasperated against his friends. Their treatment of him, indeed, had not been very lenient, nor well calculated to lead him to a proper consideration of his case; yet they had advanced some truths, more nearly concerning Job than he imagined; and the heart unhumbled before God, will never meekly receive the reproofs of men. The censure that follows is very severe. He expresses a suspicion of hypocrisy and deceit in his reprovers; that while they accused him of crimes, they did not really feel convinced in their minds that it was

so. And that the great God would not be pleased with such defenders, he would severely reprove them. Also he intimates that their thoughts were mean and unworthy of the Divine Being.—(25.)

Ver. 13—22. *He professes his confidence in God.*

Job here resolves to adhere to the testimony his own conscience gave of his integrity; and though his friends called it obstinacy, that should not shake his constancy. He resolves that he will maintain his own ways; he will never part with the satisfaction he had in having walked uprightly with God.

He comforts himself in God, and still keeps hold of his confidence in him. Observe here what he depends upon God for. Justification and salvation, the two great things we hope for through Christ. 1. Justification; I have ordered my cause, and, upon the whole matter, I know that I shall be justified. This he knew, because he knew that his Redeemer lived, ch. 19. 25. Those whose hearts are upright with God, in walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit, may be sure that through Christ there shall be no condemnation to them, but that, whoever lays any thing to their charge, they shall be justified. 2. Salvation; He also shall be my salvation. He means it not of temporal salvation, he had little expectation of that, but concerning his eternal salvation he was very confident, that God would not only be his Saviour to make him happy, but his Salvation, in the sight and enjoyment of whom he should be happy. The reason why he depended on God for salvation, is, Because a hypocrite shall not come before him. He knew himself not to be a hypocrite, and concluded he should not be rejected.

Though every outward evil, and every inward distress, should unite in our case, and continue unabated till ended by death, a strong and active faith, and acquaintance with the scriptural ground of the believer's hope, may enable the poor tempted soul to trust in and to expect salvation from the Lord.

See with what constancy he depends upon God. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. This is a high expression of faith, and what we should all labour to come up to; to trust in God, though he slay us. That is, we must be well pleased with God as a Friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an enemy, ch. 23. 8—10. We must believe that

all shall work for good to us, even when all seems to make against us, Jer. 24. 5. We must proceed and persevere in the way of our duty, though it costs us all that is dear to us in this world, even life itself, Heb. 11. 35. We must depend upon the performance of the promise, when all the ways leading to it are shut up, Rom. 4. 18. We must rejoice in God, when we have nothing else to rejoice in, and cleave to him, yea, though we cannot for the present find comfort in him. In a dying hour, we must derive from him living comforts; and this is to trust in him, though he slay us.

Job addresses himself to God, ver. 20, and entreats Him to try his cause. If his outward pains were abated, and inward horror removed, he was confident he could plead effectually in his own behalf. He desires to know what was that transgression which had brought his present calamities upon him. The address was passionate, and when the Lord actually spake, Job found that he could not answer him. He needed to be humbled and brought to greater reverence of the majesty of God.

Ver. 23—28. *Job entreats to know his sins, and God's purpose in afflicting him.*

Here Job inquires after his sins, and begs to have them discovered to him. His friends were ready enough to tell him how numerous and how heinous they were, ch. 22. 5. But Lord, says he, let me know them from Thee, for thy judgment is according to truth, theirs is not. A true penitent is willing to know the worst of himself; and we should all desire to know what our transgressions are, that we may confess them, and guard against them for the future.

He bitterly complains of God's withdrawing from him. This must be meant of something more than outward afflictions; for the loss of estate, children, health, might well consist with God's love; when that was all, he blessed the name of the Lord; but his soul was also sore vexed, and that he here laments. The holy God sometimes denies his favours, and discovers his terrors, to the best and dearest of his saints and servants in this world. These are grievous burdens to a gracious soul that values God's loving-kindness as better than life, Prov. 18. 14. A wounded spirit who can bear? Job here teaches us that when at any time we are under the sense of

God's withdrawals, we are concerned to inquire into the reason of them; what is the sin for which he corrects us; and what the good he designs us? Job's sufferings were typical of the sufferings of Christ, from whom not only men hid their faces, Isa. 53. 3, but God hid his. Witness the darkness which surrounded him on the cross, when he cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! If this were done to these green trees, what shall be done to the dry? Job humbly pleads with God his own utter inability to stand before him. We ought to have such an apprehension of the goodness and compassion of God, as to believe that he will not break the bruised reed, Matt. 12. 20.

He complains sorrowfully of God's severe dealings with him: he owns it was for his sins that God thus contended with him, but thinks it hard that his former sins, long since committed, should now be remembered against him. Afflictions are bitter things; writing of them denotes deliberation and determination; it denotes also the continuance of his affliction, for that which is written remains. 1. God sometimes writes very bitter things against the best and dearest of his saints and servants, both in outward afflictions and inward disquiet; trouble in body and trouble in mind, that he may humble them and prove them, and do them good in their latter end. 2. That the sins of youth are often the smart of age, both in respect of sorrow within, Jer. 31. 18, 19, and suffering without, ch. 20. 11. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin. 3. That when God writes bitter things against us, his design therein is to make us bring forgotten sins to mind, and so to bring us to remorse for them, as to break us off from them. This is all the fruit, to take away our sin.

Let young persons beware of indulging themselves in sin. Even in this world they may so possess the iniquities of their youth, as to have months of sorrow for moments of pleasure. Their wisdom is to remember their Creator in their early days, that they may have assured hope, and sweet peace of conscience, as the solace of their declining years.

He also complains that his present mistakes should be so strictly taken notice of. "Guilt, both of the oldest and of the freshest date, is put together to make up

the cause of my calamity." Now, 1. It was not true that God did thus seek advantages against him. God is not thus extreme to mark what we do amiss; if he were, there were no abiding for us, Ps. 130. 3. He is so far from this, that he deals not with us according to our deserts. This therefore was the language of Job's melancholy. 2. We should keep such a strict and jealous eye as this upon ourselves and our own steps, both for the discovery of sin past, and the prevention of it for the future. It is good for us all to ponder the path of our feet. He finds himself wasting away apace under the hand of God. Man, at the best, wears fast; but, under God's rebukes especially, he is soon gone. While there is so little soundness in the soul, no marvel there is so little soundness in the flesh, Ps. 38. 3.

If God mark our steps and narrowly examine our paths, we can in no wise stand before him in judgment. He would indeed write bitter things against us; both body and soul would experience his righteous vengeance. This will be the awful case of unbelievers, but there is salvation devised, provided, and revealed, not from temporal sorrows, for our bodies must still return to the dust, and perish as a garment that is moth eaten, but from the wrath to come. And when the believer, whose sins are washed away in the blood of Christ, shall drop the body, his soul shall find admission into the realms of glory, and his body shall also arise incorruptible and immortal. Seeking first this eternal salvation, let us bear our present trials without a murmur. Let us often humble ourselves for sins, long since committed, and repented of, and contemplate death as the end of all our sorrows.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1—6. *Job speaks of man's life.*

Job continues his discourse, enlarging upon the condition of man, and interspersing addresses unto God. Every man born of Adam's fallen race, is short lived, and exposed to manifold afflictions. All his show of beauty, happiness, and splendour falls before the stroke of sickness or death, as the gaudy flower before the scythe; or passes away like the fleeting shadow. Since man's days are so full of trouble, it is well that they are few, that the soul's imprisonment in the body, and banishment from the Lord, are not perpetual, are not long. When we come to

heaven, our days will be many, and perfectly free from trouble; in the mean time, faith, hope, and love balance the present grievances. Job then improperly expostulates with God, for noticing, or judging with such severity, a poor creature beneath his regard. He was a sinner, but how could it be otherwise, when he was born of sinful parents? Or, how was it possible for his conduct to be sinless, when his heart was by nature unclean? In either sense it is a decisive testimony that Job understood and believed the doctrine of original sin. Though he did not apply it in so humble and pious a manner as David, Ps. 51. 5, 6, yet he seems to have intended it as a plea, why the Lord should not deal with him according to his own works, but according to His mercy and grace.

It is determined, in the counsel and decree of God, how long we shall live. Our times are in his hand, the powers of nature act under him; in him we live and move; diseases are his servants; he kills and makes alive; nothing comes to pass by chance, not the execution done by a bow drawn at a venture: it is therefore certain that God's prescience has determined it before, for known unto God are all his works. Whatever he does, he determined, yet with a regard partly to the settled course of nature, (the end and the means are determined together,) and to the settled rules of moral government; we are no more governed by blind fate than by blind fortune. The bounds God has fixed, we cannot pass; for his counsels are unalterable, his foresight being infallible.

These considerations Job here urges as reasons why God should not be so strict in taking cognizance of him, and why he should not be so severe in his dealings with him. It is appointed to me once to die. Let it suffice that my life, at best, is as the day of a hireling, a day of toil and labour; I will make the best of the common hardships of human life, the burden and heat of the day; but let me not feel those uncommon tortures, let not my life be as the day of a malefactor.

It is very useful to reflect seriously on the shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the fading nature of all earthly enjoyments. But it is still more important to advert to the cause, and the remedy of these evils. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, Rom. 5. 12. We

receive our nature through this corrupted channel, and all the powers of our soul are polluted by it. Until we are born of the Spirit, no spiritually good thing dwells in us, or can proceed from us. Even the little good in the regenerate is defiled with sin. We should therefore humble ourselves before God, and cease from all self-dependence, casting ourselves wholly on the mercy of God, through the mediation of our Divine Surety. We should daily seek the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and look forward to heaven as the only place of perfect holiness and happiness. A span of life alone remains unto us; our duties are important in their consequences to ourselves and others. If opportunities are lost, they cannot be recovered. Then, whatever we find to do, let us do it immediately.

Ver. 7—15. *Of man's death.*

Though a tree is cut down, and the stump seems decayed in the earth, yet in a moist situation it may be expected that shoots will come forth, and grow up as a newly planted tree. But when man is cut off by death, he is for ever removed from his place in this world. His body returns to the earth, and mingles with it. The life of man may fitly be compared to the waters of a land flood, which spread far, but they are shallow; and when they are cut off from the sea or river, the overflowing of which was the cause of them, they soon dry up, and their place knows them no more. The waters of life are soon exhaled, and disappear; the body, like part of those waters, sinks into the earth, and is buried there; the soul, like another part, is drawn upward, to mingle with the waters above the firmament. Thus he lieth down, till he shall awake at the general resurrection. Is he nowhere? So some read it. Yes, he is somewhere; and it is a very awful consideration to think where they are that have given up the ghost; and where we shall be when we give it up. The soul is gone to the world of spirits, gone into eternity, gone to return no more to this world.

The bodies of the saints shall not be forgotten in the grave; there is a time appointed, a time set, for their being inquired after. We cannot be sure that we shall look through the darkness of our present troubles, and see good days after them in this world; but we may, with an eye of faith, look through the darkness of the grave, as Job here, and see better days on the other side, in a better world.

All the expressions imply belief in the great doctrine of the resurrection. Why else should he speak of death as a sleep, and mention a period to it when he shall awake, even when the heavens are no more, 2 Pet. 3. 7, 10, 11. Job prayed that God would speedily end his sorrows, and dismiss him till the appointed time of the resurrection and the general judgment, then to remember him in mercy. As death would soon remove him hence, he determined to wait till that change took place, looking forward in hope to the resurrection, when God would call him from the grave, and he would gladly answer; when God would desire and delight in the work of his hands.

Job's friends proving miserable comforters, he set himself the more to be his own comforter: he pleases himself with the expectation of a change. It cannot be meant of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. His friends indeed flattered him with the hope of that, but he himself all along despaired of it. Comforts founded upon uncertainties, at best must needs be uncertain comforts; and therefore, no doubt, it is something more sure which he here bears up himself with the expectation of.

If our sins are forgiven, and our hearts renewed to holiness, heaven will be the rest of our souls, while our bodies are hidden in the grave, from the malice of our enemies, feeling no more pain from our corruptions, or our corrections. At the appointed time God will again remember us; then we shall find every cloud dispersed, every frown removed; no more tokens of his displeasure will be experienced for ever. A few more days of conflict, and this change shall begin in death. The believer will have for ever done with sin and sorrow. His soul, in the mansions of bliss, will joyfully await that reunion with the body, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. For this appointed period let us wait with godly fear, realizing faith, and patient hope; with diligent preparation and patient continuance in well doing, neither desirous of living, nor impatient of the troubles of life. Grace in the soul is the work of God's own hands; therefore he will not forsake it in this world, Ps. 138. 8, but will have a desire to it, to perfect it in the other, and to crown it with endless glory.

The word which here expresses the desire of the heavenly Father, is the strongest imaginable. Such conceptions Job had

of the great love of God, wherewith he hath loved us, and which, when the covenant of redemption should be fully executed in the remission of our sins, and the perfecting them that are sanctified, by the redemption of the body, would rest in delight upon the glorified objects of his mercy.—(25.)

10. Two words are here used for man. Geber, a mighty man, though mighty, dies; Adam, a man of the earth, because earthly, gives up the ghost.—*Henry.*

Ver. 16—22. *By sin man is subject to corruption.*

Job's faith and hope spake, and grace appeared to revive; but here depravity again prevails. He represents God as collecting evidence, and carrying matters to extremity against him. And in that case swift destruction would come upon him without remedy. His indignation would be as powerful to bring this as an earthquake to overturn the strongest mountains; or if more gradual, yet as effectually as the waters to wash away the earth and its productions, and to wear away the stones. The Lord must prevail against all who contend with him. By sickness or death he changes their countenances, and sends them away into misery. When the body is full of pain, and the soul full of terror at the approach of death, the sufferer cannot notice either the prosperity or adversity of his family; what then will the things about which they are so anxious avail the wicked in the state of final misery? Death will be the destruction of all those hopes which are built upon worldly confidences, and confined to worldly comforts. Hope in Christ, and hope in heaven, death will consummate, and not destroy.

But let us not yield to the suggestions of Satan or of unbelief, to conclude that the Lord can deal severely with a poor sinner who hath a hope of everlasting life, or that he intends the misery and condemnation of those that trust in his mercy, desiring to know and to do his will. God may send salutary chastisements, disease, and pain; we may lose all comfort in those who are near and dear to us, every hope of earthly happiness may be destroyed, but God will receive the believer into realms of eternal happiness.

When a man has been a few days sick, what a change is there in his countenance! How much more when he has been a few minutes dead! The approach of death will make the strongest and stoutest to change countenance; it

will make the most merry, smiling countenance to look grave and serious, and the most bold, daring countenance to look pale and timorous.

But what a change awaits the prosperous unbeliever! How will he answer when God shall call him to his tribunal? Where then will be his possessions, pleasures, and distinctions? All past away, and the soul filled with unutterable anguish! The Lord is yet upon a mercy-seat, ready to be gracious. O that sinners, therefore, would be wise, that they would consider their latter end.

Man's birth is often expressed by his coming into the world, and his death by his going out of it; for here he has no continuance, no abiding, no rest; yet there is no remove till God gives him dismissal by death. Then he sends men away, some in wrath, to take up their abode with devils and damned spirits; others in love, to be in better company, with God and Christ, with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.—(27.)

When a man is in conflict with death, tell him then the most agreeable or the most painful news, it is all alike; he knows it not, he perceives it not. He is going to that world where he will be a perfect stranger to all those things which here filled and affected him. The consideration of this should moderate our cares. God will know what comes of our children and families when we are gone; to him, therefore, let us commit them, with him let us leave them.

How dreadful the agonies of death are! While his flesh is upon him, so it may be read, that is, the body he is so loth to lay down, it shall have pain; and while his soul is within him, that is, the spirit he is so loth to resign, it shall mourn. Dying work is hard work; dying pangs are, commonly, sore pangs. It is folly therefore for men to defer their repentance to a death-bed, and to have that to do which is the one thing needful, when they are really unfit to do any thing; but it is true wisdom, by seeking peace with God in Christ, to treasure up comforts which will support and relieve us against the pains and sorrows of a dying hour.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1—16. *Elihu reproves Job for justifying himself.*

Elihu here leads on a second attack upon Job, instead of being softened by

his complaints. Job had been reputed a wise man ; but he asked whether it consisted with that character, to vent empty notions, and to satisfy his conscience with them, when as unfit for that purpose as the wind to satisfy his hunger.

He charges Job with impiety and irreligion ; Thou castest off the fear of God, regard to him, and then thou restrainest prayer. See what religion is summed up in ; fearing God, and praying to him ; the former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected ; and those who live without prayer, certainly live without God in the world. Those who restrain prayer, prove that they cast off fear. Surely those are in no care about their souls, who make no applications to God for his grace. Those who are prayerless, are fearless and graceless. When the fear of God is cast off, all sin is let in, and a door open to all manner of profaneness. It is especially bad with those who have had some fear of God, but have cast it off, have been frequent in prayer, but now restrain it. How are they fallen ! How is their first love lost ! It is still worse to restrain others from prayer, to forbid and discourage prayer.

Eliphaz charges this upon Job. Even wise and good men too often, in the heat of disputation, charge upon their adversaries those consequences of their opinions, which are not fairly drawn from them, and which really they abhor. This is not doing as we would be done by.

He further accused him of covering his iniquity with the semblance of piety. This was unjust. Job had expressed himself unadvisedly ; but he had spoken very honourably of God, and not inconsistently with true piety.

Eliphaz charges him with arrogance and self-conceit. How common are such replies in the heat of argument ! but how simple do they look afterward !

He charges Job with contempt of the counsels and comforts that were given him by his friends. They had said some very good things ; but, in their application to Job, they were miserable comforters. We are apt to think that considerable which we ourselves say, when others, with good reason, think it small and trifling. He charges him with opposition to God. Eliphaz wanted candour and charity, else he would not have put such harsh constructions upon the

words of one that had a settled reputation for piety, and was now in temptation. He represents him as putting a slight upon Divine consolations ; but Divine comforts are great things, it is very bad if they are small with us. " Is there some secret thing with thee ? " something to support thyself with which nobody else knows of ? Or, Is there some secret sin harboured and indulged in thy bosom, which hinders the operation of Divine comforts ? None lightly esteem these blessings but those that love the world and the flesh.

Eliphaz then charges Job with justifying himself to that degree, as even to deny his share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature. Man, in his fallen state, cannot pretend to be clean and righteous before God, or recommend himself to his favour. He is unclean and unrighteous, because of his corrupt nature, which is both his guilt and his pollution. With these plain truths Eliphaz thinks to convince Job, whereas he had said the same, ch. 14. 4. But it does not therefore follow, that Job is a hypocrite, and a wicked man, which is all that he denied. Though man, as born of a woman, is not clean, yet, as born again of the Spirit, he is. Eliphaz further shows, 1. That the brightest creatures are imperfect and impure before God. God employs both saints and angels, but trusts neither with his service, without giving them fresh supplies of strength and wisdom for it, as knowing they are not sufficient of themselves, and neither more nor better than his grace makes them. 2. That man is much more so. If saints are not to be trusted, much less sinners. If the heavens are not pure, which are as God made them, much less man, who is degenerated. Nay, he is abominable and filthy in the sight of God, and, if ever he repent, he is so in his own sight, and therefore he abhors himself. Sin is an odious thing, it makes man hateful ; but he drinks iniquity, that abominable thing which the Lord hates, as greedily, and with as much pleasure, as a man drinks water when he is thirsty. It is his constant drink ; it is natural to sinners to commit iniquity. It gratifies, but does not satisfy. The more men sin, the more they would sin.

This is a proof that these disputants were deeply convinced of the doctrine of original sin, and the total depravity of human nature, as far as man is left to his

own innate propensities. Shall we not then admire the patience of God in bearing with us? and still more his love to us in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, his beloved Son? Washed in his blood, and arrayed in his righteousness, the believer is justified before God; and, by his Spirit, is sanctified and made meet for his holy service, and for heavenly happiness: may we seek and find these precious fruits of the love of God our Saviour!

Ver. 17—35. *Eliphaz shows the unquietness of wicked men.*

Eliphaz here maintains that those who are wicked are certainly miserable: whence he would infer, that those who are miserable are certainly wicked, and that therefore Job was so. He promises to teach him from his own experience and observation. It is of good use to take notice of the providences of God concerning the children of men, from which many a good lesson may be learned; also from the wisdom of the ancients. What is learned from ancestors let us transmit to posterity, Ps. 78. 3—6.

Eliphaz then aims to show, that those who are wise and good, do ordinarily prosper in this world. But because many of God's people have remarkably prospered in this world, it does not therefore follow that those who are crossed and impoverished, as Job, are not God's people.

Eliphaz shows also that wicked people, particularly oppressors, are subject to continual terror, live very uncomfortably, and perish very miserably. In this head he enlarges, showing, that even they that impiously dare God's judgments, yet cannot but dread them, and will feel them at last. He thinks the application easy, and that Job might, in this description, see himself. Let us see how he describes the sinner who lives thus miserably. 1. He bids defiance to God, and to his authority and power. Tell him of the Divine law, he will not have even Him that made him, to restrain him or rule over him; tell him of the Divine wrath, he will have his way, and will not be controlled by law or conscience, or the notices of a judgment to come. It is the prodigious madness of presumptuous sinners, that they enter the lists with Omnipotence. Sinners, in general, run from God; but the presumptuous sinner, who sins with a high hand, runs upon him, bids defiance to him; and it is easy to foretell what will be the issue. 2. He wraps himself up in security and

sensuality. "He covers his face with his fatness." This signifies both the pampering of his flesh, and the hardening of his heart thereby against the judgments of God. Gratifying the appetites of the body, feeding and feasting to the full, often turns to the damage of the soul and its interests. Why is God forgotten and slighted, but because happiness is placed in the delights of sense? 3. He enriches himself with the spoils of all about him. Proud and cruel men take a strange pleasure in ruins, when of their own making; triumphing in destruction. Those that grasp at all, lose the comfort of all, and make themselves miserable in the midst of all. He does this by malice and falsehood. They conceive mischief, and effect it by deceit, pretending to protect those whom they design to subdue. From such wicked men God deliver all good men.

Let us see now what is the miserable condition of this wicked man. His inward peace is continually disturbed. He seems to those about him to be easy, who therefore envy him; but a wicked man has little comfort and satisfaction in his own breast; he knows that his wealth and power will not last; he knows that both Heaven and earth are angry against him. Fear came in with sin, Gen. 3. 10, and still attends it. He knows that the day of darkness, ver. 23, is appointed to him, that it cannot be put off. This day of darkness is that day of the Lord in which all wicked people will be doomed to endless darkness. No marvel that trouble and anguish make him afraid of worse to come. He that would keep his peace, let him keep a good conscience.

Good men expect light at evening time, light out of darkness; but what reason have they to expect that they shall return out of the darkness of trouble, who would not return from the darkness of sin, but went on in it? Ps. 82. 5. He perplexes himself with continual care, especially if Providence frown upon him, ver. 23. David never saw the righteous so forsaken as to beg their bread, for, verily, they shall be fed by the charitable unasked, Ps. 37. 3, 25. But the wicked want it. How should they find mercy, who never showed mercy?

His outward prosperity will soon come to an end, and all his confidence, and all his comfort, will come to an end with it. See how the judgments of God cross

this worldly wicked man. He is in care to get, but he shall not be rich. His own covetous mind keeps him from being truly rich. He is not rich that has not enough; and he has not enough, that does not think he has. He is in care to keep what he has got, but in vain; his substance will dwindle and come to nothing; God blasts it. Wealth, gotten by vanity, will certainly be diminished. Some have themselves lived to see the ruin of estates raised by oppression; they go, however, with a curse to those who succeed. He is in care to leave to his children after him; but in this he is crossed. Many a man's family is ruined by his iniquity. He is in care to enjoy it a great while himself; but in that also he is crossed. He is in care, when he is in trouble, how to get out of it; but in this also he is crossed. The congregation of them, the whole confederacy, they and all their tabernacles, shall be desolate. It is impossible that these should end well.

This must be the case of all who live and die, forgetful of God, and neglecting his salvation. Let us apply these truths to our own heart and conscience, and examine our own state and character, ceasing uncandidly to judge and condemn our brethren. Many important truths are in this discourse, but as far as related to outward prosperity, it implied an unfair application to the case of Job.

Will the prosperity of presumptuous sinners end thus miserably? Then let the mischiefs which befall others, be our warnings. Those who trust to their sinful ways of getting wealth, their arts will deceive them, and perhaps ruin them in this world. Those who trust to their wealth when they have gotten it, especially to the wealth they have gotten dishonestly, the guilt that cleaves to it, will ruin the joy of it. They will own, at length, with the utmost confusion, that a deceived heart turned them aside.

Surely those sharp and bitter reproaches could not fail to add to Job's misery. We naturally look around in our sorrows for some to pity, while this distressed sufferer met with nothing but reproof. But let us pass over men, who are but instruments, and behold how the Lord works good from evil. Though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. No calamity,

no trouble, however heavy, however severe, can rob a follower of the Lord of his favour. What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Neither death, nor life, neither things present, nor things to come. Having him, in him we possess all things, Rom. 8. 38, 39.—(37.)

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1—5. *Job reproves his friends.*

Eliphaz had represented Job's discourses as unprofitable, and nothing to the purpose; Job here gives his the same character. Those who are free in passing censures, must expect to have them returned; it is easy, it is endless: but what good does it do? It will stir up men's passions, but will never convince their judgments, nor set truth in a clear light.

Job here reproves Eliphaz for needless repetitions; and for unskilful applications. What Job says here of his friends, is true of all creatures, in comparison with God; one time or other, we shall be made to see and own that miserable comforters are they all. When we are under convictions of sin, terrors of conscience, or the arrests of death, only the blessed Spirit can comfort effectually; all others, without him, do it miserably, and to no purpose.

Job desires his friends, for a little while, to suppose themselves in misery like him, and him at ease like them. Whatever our brethren's sorrows are, we ought by sympathy to make them our own; we know not how soon they may be so. We are not affected suitably with the sufferings of others, because we love not our neighbours as ourselves.

He represents the unkindness of their conduct toward him. See what is the duty we owe to our brethren in affliction. We should say and do all we can to strengthen them, suggesting to them such considerations as are proper to encourage their confidence in God, and to support their sinking spirits. Faith and patience are the strength of the afflicted; what helps these graces, confirms the feeble. Had Job been in health, at ease and prosperous, and they in sickness, anguish, and adversity, he would have suggested consolations to strengthen their faith and patience, and to assuage their grief.

Ver. 6—16. *Job represents his case as deplorable.*

Here is a doleful representation of Job's grievances. O what reason have we to bless God, that we are not making such complaints! He complains,

1. That his family was scattered. He had company indeed, but such as he would rather have been without, for they seemed to triumph in his desolation. If lovers and friends are put far from us, we must see and own God's hand in it.

2. That his body was worn away with diseases and pains. These he calls witnesses of God's displeasure against him.

3. That his enemy was a terror to him. Either Eliphaz, who showed himself very much exasperated against him, or Satan: he was his enemy that hated him, and perhaps, by the Divine permission, terrified him, and thus aimed to make him curse God. It is not improbable that this is the enemy he means. Or God himself: if we understand it of him, the expressions are indeed as rash as any Job used. God hates none of his creatures.

4. That all about him came upon him as with open mouth to devour him, such was their conduct to him. Herein Job was a type of Christ, as many of the ancients make him: these very expressions are used in the predictions of his sufferings, Ps. 22. 13; Mic. 5. 1; which was literally fulfilled, Matt. 26. 67. How were they increased that troubled him!

5. That God delivered him into their hands. They could have had no power against him, if it had not been given them from above. God sometimes makes use of wicked men as his sword to one another, Ps. 17. 13; and his rod to his own children, Isa. 10. 5. Herein also Job was a type of Christ, who was delivered into wicked hands, to be crucified and slain, by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, Acts 2. 23.

6. That God not only delivered him into the hands of the wicked, but took him into his own hands too, into which it is a fearful thing to fall. God, in afflicting him, had seemed as if he had no mercy in reserve for him, as if he were singled out to be made an example. God has archers at command who are sure to hit the mark. Even good men, when in great troubles, have much ado not to entertain hard thoughts of God.

7. That he had divested himself of all his honour, and all his comfort, in compliance with the afflicting providences that surrounded him. He humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, ver. 15, 16. When God brings down our condition, that should bring down our spirits. Eliphaz had represented Job as unhum-

bled under his affliction; No, says Job, I know better things; the dust is now the fittest place for me. My face is foul with weeping so constantly, for my sins, for God's displeasure against me, and for my friends' unkindness; this has brought a shadow of death upon my eyelids. In this he was a type of Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and much in tears, and pronounced those blessed that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Ver. 17—22. *Job maintains his innocence.*

Job's condition was very deplorable; but he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he never allowed himself in any gross sin. None was ever more ready to acknowledge sins of infirmity; but he could not charge himself with any enormous crime. He had kept a conscience void of offence toward men and toward God. Eliphaz had charged him with hypocrisy in religion, but he specifies prayer, the great act of religion, and professes that in that he was pure, though not from all infirmity, yet it was not like the prayers of the Pharisees, who looked no further than to be seen of men.

This assertion of his own integrity he backs with a solemn imprecation of shame and confusion to himself, if it were not true. He could appeal to God concerning his integrity. The witness in our own bosoms for us, will stand us in little stead, if we have not a witness in heaven for us; this is Job's triumph. It is an unspeakable comfort to a good man, when under the censure of his brethren, that there is a God in heaven, who knows his integrity, and will clear it up sooner or later: see John 5. 31, 37.

He had a God to go to, who he doubted not did now take cognizance of his sorrows. Even tears, when sanctified to God, give ease to troubled spirits; and if men slight our griefs, this may comfort us, that God regards them. Some give a gospel sense of ver. 21, and the original will very well bear it; And he will plead (that is, There is one that will plead) for man with God, even the Son of man, for his friend, or neighbour. Those who pour out tears before God, though they cannot plead for themselves, by reason of their distance and defects, have a Friend to plead for them, even the Son of man, and on this we must ground all our hopes of acceptance with God.

He had a prospect of death which would put a period to all his troubles.

To die is to go the way whence we shall not return; it is a journey to our long home; there will be no coming back to our state in this world, nor any change of our state in the other world. We must all of us, very certainly, and very shortly go this journey. How weary and desolate will the wicked there be! There will be incessant weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

But let these reflections lead us to Gethsemane and Golgotha! The Saviour indeed had cause to complain that he was made weary with the burden of our sins—that all his followers were gone—that his enemy was permitted to assault him—that he was delivered into the hands of the ungodly, who reproached, smote, insulted, and crucified him. Yea, that it pleased the Lord to bruise him and inflict upon him agonies unknown, yet not for injustice; his prayer was really pure. He was wounded for our transgressions, and suffered for our sins, that he might deliver us from the wrath to come, and bestow upon us the gifts of eternal life! Should he not then be precious to our souls? And ought we not to be ready to obey and suffer for his sake? If our conscience be sprinkled with his atoning blood, and testify to our integrity—if our witness be in heaven and our record on high, that we are not living in sin or hypocrisy, though afflictions abound, enemies triumph, and friends despise us, yet God will receive our prayer, regard our tears, and in due time put a period to our trials. When we go the way whence we shall not return, it will be a release from prison, and an entrance to everlasting happiness.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1—9. *Job appeals from man to God.*

In this chapter Job reflects upon the harsh censures which his friends had passed upon him, and, looking upon himself as a dying man, he appeals to God, and begs of him speedily to appear for him, and right him, because they had wronged him, and he knew not how to right himself. But he hopes that though it should be a surprise, it will be no stumbling-block to good people, to see him thus abused. He reflects upon the vain hopes they had fed him with, that he should yet see good days; his days were just at an end, and, with his body, all his hopes would be buried in the dust.

It is good for every one of us to look

upon ourselves as dying, and especially to think of it when we are sick. Our life is going, for the breath of life is going. It is continually going forth. Let us get spiritual life breathed into us, and that breath will never be corrupted. Our time is ending. It concerns us carefully to redeem the days of time, and to spend them in getting ready for the days of eternity, which will never be extinct. Wherever we go, there is but a step between us and the grave. Whatever is unready, that is ready. If the graves be ready for us, it concerns us to be ready for the graves.

He calls upon them to place or lay down a pledge with him, ver. 3, referring no doubt to the practice of the times, similar to what we find in many ancient authors. They were to bind themselves under forfeiture of the pledge, each to prove the truth of his assertion:—Job of his innocency, or his friends the guilt with which they had charged him—(25.)

Observe how Job describes their discourses with him. They are mockers, who deride my calamities. He reckons them also among those that speak flattery to their friends. They all came to mourn with him; Eliphaz began with a commendation of him. They had all promised him that he should be happy, if he would take their advice. Now all this he looked upon as flattery. They provoked him, and then condemned him for his resentment of it.

He construes it as a sign that God had hid their heart from understanding, and that in this matter their wonted wisdom was departed from them. It would be a lasting reproach to them, and would entail a curse upon their families; not only for themselves, but for their posterity.

We see the good use which the righteous should make of Job's afflictions from God, from his enemies, and from his friends, ver. 8, 9. The saints are described as upright men, that act from a steady principle, with a single eye. This was Job's own character. They should be affected with the account of Job's troubles. What use will good people make of it? 1. It will amaze them. Upright men, though satisfied, in general, that God is wise and holy in all he does, yet cannot but be astonished at such trying dispensations of Providence, which will not be unfolded till the mystery of God shall be finished. 2. It will animate them. Instead of being deterred from, and discour-

raged in the service of God, by the hard usage which this faithful servant of God met with, they shall be the more emboldened to proceed and persevere in it.

It would excite the upright to distinguish themselves from hypocritical professors; especially such as condemned others, merely because they were afflicted. Thus when God should make known his real character, and the reason of Job's extraordinary trials, his example would be a decided case that no adversity proved a man to be wicked, or an object of Divine wrath. This would encourage the righteous in the midst of difficulties, nay, to grow stronger in faith under trials. This hath been the effect of Job's sufferings, and this was one great design for which they were permitted. The righteous shall, with the more constancy and resolution, hold on his way, and press forward. Those who keep their eye upon heaven as their end, will keep their feet in the paths of religion as their way, whatever difficulties and discouragements they meet with in it. They will not only hold on their way, but will grow stronger and stronger, and, by the sight of other good men's trials, and the experience of their own, they will be made more vigorous and lively in their duty, more warm and affectionate, more resolute and undaunted.

Ver. 10—16. *His hope is not in life, but in death.*

Job's friends had pretended to comfort him with the hope of his return to a prosperous estate again; he here shows that those do not go wisely about the work of comforting the afflicted, who fetch their comforts from the possibility of their recovery and enlargement in this world. Though that is not to be despaired of, it is, at the best, uncertain, and if it should fail, the comfort built upon it will fail too. It is therefore our wisdom to comfort ourselves, and others, in distress, with that which will not fail—the promise of God, his love and grace, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life. He also shows that it would be his folly to heed them; for all his measures were already broken, he was full of confusion, and he should never have the satisfaction of seeing his designs effected. The end of our days will be the end of all our contrivances and hopes for this world; but if with full purpose of heart we cleave to the Lord, death will not break off that purpose. Job being thus put upon new counsels, was under constant uneasiness.

He counted upon no house but the grave. See how he endeavours not only to reconcile himself to the grave, but to recommend it to himself: It is my house. The grave is a house, to the wicked it is a prison-house, ch. 24. 19, 20. Every one of us must shortly remove to this house; it is our wisdom to provide accordingly. •

He counted upon no quiet bed but in the darkness. The grave is a bed, for we shall rest in it in the evening of our day on earth, and rise from it in the morning of our everlasting day, Isa. 57. 2. Let this make good people willing to die; it is but going to bed, they are weary, and it is time that they were in their beds. Why should they not go willingly, when their Father calls? Nay, "I have made my bed," by preparation for it; have endeavoured to make it easy, by keeping conscience pure, by seeing that Christ lay in this bed, and by looking beyond it to the resurrection.

He counted upon no agreeable relations but what he had in the grave. Job complained that his kindred were estranged from him, ch. 19. 13, 14; here he claims acquaintance with other relations that would cleave to him. We are all of us nearly akin to corruption and the worms.

He saw all his hopes from this world dropping into the grave with him. He is not hopeless, but his hope is not there where they would have it be. If in this life only he had hope, he were of all men most miserable: No, as for my hope, that hope which I comfort and support myself with, who shall see it? It is something out of sight that I hope for, not things which are seen, which are temporal, but things not seen, which are eternal. What is his hope, he will tell us, ch. 19. 25. I seek not for that which perishes, but for that which abides for ever. But as for the hopes you would buoy me up with, they shall go down with me to the pit; you are dying men, and cannot make good your promises; I am a dying man, and cannot enjoy the good you promise. Since, therefore, our rest will be together in the dust, let us lay aside the thoughts of this world, and set our hearts upon another. We must shortly be in the dust, under the bars of the pit, held fast there, never to loose the bands of death till the general resurrection. But we shall rest there, we shall rest together there. Job and his friends cannot agree now, but they will both be quiet in the

grave; the dust of that will shortly stop their mouths, and put an end to the controversy. Let the foresight of this cool the heat of all contenders, and moderate the disputers of this world. Let us learn to renounce carnal hopes and anxieties; to execute immediately every wise and useful design; to cast all our cares upon Him that careth for us. Let us remember how nearly our bodies are allied to corruption, the worm and the dust; and let us seek for that lively hope which shall be accomplished when the hope of the wicked shall be put out in darkness; that when our bodies are in the grave, our souls may enjoy the rest reserved for the people of God.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1—4. *Bildad reproves Job as haughty and impatient.*

Bildad here shoots his arrows, even bitter words, against poor Job, little thinking that in this instance he was serving Satan's design, in adding to his affliction. Bildad had before given Job good advice and encouragement; here he used nothing but rebukes and presages of approaching ruin. He called upon Job to mark with attention what he said; because Job would not allow him and his companions to be oracles, Bildad took offence. And because Job would not admit himself to be wicked, he concluded that he shut out the providence of God from the management of human affairs. Violent anger torments and tears ourselves; and however we fret and repine, we might more easily remove the rocks than disannul the more immovable purposes of God, or alter the measures of his wise and righteous government. His hot spirit was willing to find a pretence to be hard upon Job. He that inclines to be severe upon others, will have it thought that they have first been so upon him.

Ver. 5—10. *Ruin attends the wicked.*

The rest of Bildad's discourse is a description of the miserable condition of a wicked man, in which there is much certain truth, which will be of excellent use, if we consider that a sinful condition is a sad condition, and that iniquity will be men's ruin, if they do not repent. But it is not true that all wicked people are visibly and openly made thus miserable in this world; nor that all who are brought into great distress and trouble in this world, are to be adjudged wicked men, though

no other proof appears against them. Therefore, though Bildad thought the application of it to Job was easy, yet it was not safe nor just. It is common for angry disputants to rank their opponents among God's enemies, and to draw perverse conclusions from important truths.

The destruction of the wicked is foreseen and foretold, under the similitude of darkness. Observe here, the wicked man may have some light for a while, some pleasure, some joy, some hope within, as well as wealth, and honour, and power without. But his light is but a spark, a little thing, and soon extinguished. It is but a candle, wasting and burning down, and easily blown out. It is not the light of the Lord, (that is sun-light,) but the light of his own fire, and sparks of his own kindling, Isa. 50. 11. His light will certainly be put out at length, quite put out, so that not the least spark of it shall remain, with which to kindle another fire. Even while he is in the body, which is the tabernacle of the soul, 2 Cor. 5. 1, the light shall be dark, he shall have no true solid comfort, no joy that is satisfying, no hope that is supporting; even the light that is in him is darkness; and how great is that darkness! But when he is put out of this tabernacle by death, his candle shall be put out with him. The period of his life will be the final period of all his days, and will turn all his hopes into endless despair. When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish, Prov. 11. 7. He shall lie down in sorrow.

The preparatives for that destruction are represented under the similitude of a beast or bird caught in a snare, or a malefactor taken into custody, to be punished.

Satan is preparing for his destruction. He is the robber that shall prevail against him; as he was a murderer, so he was a robber, from the beginning. He, as the tempter, lays snares for sinners in the way, wherever they go, and he shall prevail. If he make them sinful like himself, he will make them miserable like himself. Satan hunts for the precious life.

The wicked man is preparing for his own destruction, by going on in sin, and so treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. God gives him up, as he deserves and desires, to his own counsels, and then his own sinful projects and pursuits bring him into mischief. He is snared in the work of his own hands, Ps. 9. 16, his own tongue falls upon him, Ps. 64. 8. In the

transgression of an evil man there is a snare.

God is preparing for his destruction. See here, how the sinner is infatuated, to run himself into the snare. How he is embarrassed; he shall not compass what he intended; and the more he strives to extricate himself, the more will he be entangled. Evil men wax worse and worse. How he is secured; The gin shall take him by the heel. He can no more escape the Divine wrath that is in pursuit of him, than a man, so held, can flee from the pursuer. God knows how to reserve the wicked for the day of judgment, 2 Pet. 2. 9.

Ver. 11—21. *The ruin of the wicked.*

Bildad here describes the destruction wicked people are reserved for in the other world, and which, in some degree, often seizes them in this world. Come and see what a miserable condition the sinner is in when his day to fall comes.

See him disheartened and weakened by continual terrors, arising from the sense of guilt, and the dread of God's wrath. He that carries his own accuser always in his bosom, cannot but be afraid on every side. This will drive him to his feet, like the malefactor, who, being conscious of his guilt, flees when none pursues, Prov. 28. 1. But his feet will do him no service; they are fast in the snare. The way of sin is a way of fear, and leads to everlasting confusion, of which the present terrors of an impure and unpacified conscience are earnest, as to Cain and Judas.

Miserable indeed a wicked man's death is, how secure soever his life was. See him dying; all that he trusts to for his support shall be taken from him. His own soul was his confidence, but that shall be rooted out of the tabernacle of the body, as a tree that cumbered the ground. Thy soul shall be required of thee. See him dead, and see his case then with an eye of faith. He was surrounded with terrors while he lived, ver. 11, and death was the king of all those terrors; for it is by reason of death that sinners are, all their lifetime, subject to bondage, Heb. 2. 15, and at length they will be brought to that which they so long feared, as a captive to the conqueror. Death is terrible to nature; our Saviour himself prayed, Father, save me from this hour; but to the wicked it is, in a special manner, the king of terrors, both as a period to that life in which they placed their happiness, and a passage to that life where they will find

endless misery. How happy, then, are the saints, and how indebted to the Lord Jesus, by whom death is so far abolished, and the property of it altered, that this king of terrors is become a friend and servant! He is then driven from the light of this world, and his prosperous condition in it, into darkness, the darkness of the grave, the darkness of hell; into utter darkness, never to see light, Ps. 49. 19, not the least gleam, nor any hopes of it. He would fain stay here, he is loth to depart, but go he must; all the world is weary of him, and therefore chases him out. This is death to a wicked man.

See his family sunk and cut off. The wrath and curse of God light and lie, not only upon his head and heart, but upon his house too. His children shall perish, either with him or after him. Thus the houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Ahab were cut off. They that take root in the earth, may expect it will thus be dried up; but if we be rooted in Christ, even our leaf shall not wither, much less shall our branch be cut off. Those who consult the true honour of their family, and the welfare of its branches, will be afraid of withering it by sin. The extirpation of the sinner's family is mentioned again, ver. 19. Sin entails a curse upon posterity, and the iniquity of the fathers is often visited upon the children. Herein it is probable that Bildad reflects upon the death of Job's children and servants, but all that are written childless, are not thereby written graceless; there is a name better than that of sons and daughters.

See his memory buried with him; he shall either be forgotten, or spoken of with dishonour. Thus the judgments of God follow him after death in this world, as an indication of the misery his soul is in after death, and an earnest of that everlasting shame and contempt to which he shall rise in the great day. The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot, Prov. 10. 7.

And see all this averred as the unanimous sense of the patriarchal age, grounded upon their knowledge of God, and their many observations of his providence; Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place, this the condition of him that knows not God! See here what is the beginning, and what is the end, of the wickedness of this wicked world. The beginning of it is ignorance of God, and it is a wilful

ignorance, for that is knowy of him which is sufficient to leave them for ever inexcusable. They know not God, and then they commit all sin. The end of it is utter destruction. Such, so miserable, are the dwellings of the wicked. Vengeance will be taken of those that know not God, 2 Thes. 1. 8. For those whom he has not honour from, he will get him honour upon: let us therefore stand in awe and sin not, for it will certainly be bitterness in the latter end.

Job's former prosperity and sudden calamities were evidently alluded to. But as Bildad did not so much as advise him to repent and seek for deliverance either from present or future misery, Job had more cause than ever to say, "Miserable comforters are ye."

It would be well if this report of the misery of wicked men would induce any to flee from the wrath to come, from which none of their power, policy, or influence can deliver them. But Jesus ever liveth to deliver all who trust in him. They who partake of his salvation are happy in tribulations; they have hope and comfort, death is no longer to them a king of terrors. Nor will they be driven out of this world, from light to darkness. They will be removed to a land of perfect happiness. They shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and may depart hence with the hope that their posterity shall also be blessed. Bear up then, suffering believers. Ye shall for a little time have sorrow, but your Beloved, your Saviour, will see you again; your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

13. The first-born of death denotes the most fatal and cruel death.—*T. H. Horne.*

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1—7. *Job complains of unkind usage.*

Job's friends had passed a very severe censure upon him as a wicked man, because he was so grievously afflicted; here he describes their unkindness to him, and answers their harsh censures, by showing them that what they condemned was capable of excuse.

The breakings out of his passion, though not justifiable, yet were excusable, considering his grief, and the extremity of his misery. Three things he would have them consider, 1. That his trouble was very great. He was overthrown, and could not help himself. 2. That God was the Author of it, and that in it God fought

against him. 3. That he complained of his pain, but got no ease; begged to know the cause of his affliction, but could not discover it. God for a time may seem to turn away his ear from his people, to be angry at their prayers, and overlook their appeals to him, and they must be excused if, in that case, they complain bitterly. Wo unto us if God be against us!

Harsh language from friends greatly adds to the weight of afflictions; yet if they unjustly condemn us, it is best not to lay the matter to heart, lest we should be tempted to retaliate or to harbour resentment. Rather let us look to Him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and was treated with far more cruelty than Job was, or we can be.

Ver. 8—22. *Job shows that God was the author of his afflictions, and that no compassion was shown to him by man.*

How doleful are Job's complaints! What is the fire of hell but the wrath of God? Seared consciences will feel it hereafter, but do not fear it now. Enlightened consciences fear it now, but shall not feel it hereafter. Job's present apprehension was, that God counted him as one of his enemies; and yet at the same time God loved him, and gloried in him, as his faithful friend. It is a gross mistake, but a very common one, to think that whom God afflicts he treats as his enemies; whereas, on the contrary, as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens; it is the discipline of his sons.

Which way soever Job looked, he thought he saw the tokens of God's displeasure against him. Did he look back upon his former prosperity? He saw God's hand putting an end to that. See the vanity of worldly glory; and whatever strips us, we must see and own God's hand, and comply with his design. Did he look upon his present troubles? It did not so much trouble him, that miseries came upon him in troops, as that they were God's troops, in whom it seemed as if God fought against him, and intended his destruction. Time was when God's hosts encamped round him for safety; ch. 1. 10. Now, on the contrary, they surrounded him, and destroyed him on every side. Did he look forward for deliverance? He saw the hand of God cutting off all hopes of that. Hope in this life is a perishing thing, but the hope of good men, when it is cut off from this world, is but removed,

like a tree transplanted from this nursery to the garden of the Lord. We shall have no reason to complain if God thus remove our hopes from the sand to the rock, from things temporal to things eternal.

Job complains of the unkindness of his relations, and of all his old acquaintance. In this also he owns the hand of God. As it was their sin, God was not the author of it, it is Satan that alienates men's minds from their brethren in affliction; but as it was Job's trouble, God ordered it for the completing of his trial. Every creature is that to us which God makes it to be: yet this does not excuse Job's relations and friends.

Those whom he loved not only turned from him, but were turned against him, and did all they could to make him odious, so to justify themselves in being strange to him. So uncertain is the friendship of men; but if God be our Friend, he will not fail us in time of need. But let none that pretend either to humanity or christianity, ever use their friends as Job's friends used him: adversity is the proof of friendship.

But when all forsook him, the wife of his bosom should have been tender of him. Though he spake to her, not with the authority, but with the tenderness of a husband, yet she regarded him not. Now, it appeared, the devil spared her to him, not only to be his tempter, but to be his tormentor. By what she said to him at first, Curse God and die, it appeared that she had little religion; and what can one expect that is kind and good, from those who have not the fear of God, and are not governed by conscience?

Job complains of the decay of his body; all the beauty and strength of that were gone. He could take as little pleasure in himself as others took in him. See what little reason we have to indulge the body, which, after all our care, may be consumed by diseases it has in itself the seeds of.

Upon all these accounts, he recommends himself to the compassion of his friends, and justly blames their harshness with him. Why do ye persecute me as God? We must aim to be like the Most Holy and the Most Merciful, but not like the Most High and Most Mighty. God gives not account of any of his matters, but we must.

It is very distressing to one who loves God, to be under the rebukes of his providence, to experience the sense of his

displeasure, and to be tempted to conclude that the Lord counteth him as an enemy. To be bereaved at once of outward help and comfort, and of inward consolation—to have every prospect of further miseries, and the soul disquieted with horrors!—yet, if to all this the character be loaded with infamy, every friend and relative set against the sufferer—if disease and anguish, which should command sympathy, only excite abhorrence, exciting the contempt of the vilest—if this, and more, come upon a believer at once, it only renders him more conformable to the Saviour, and does not weaken the proof of his being a child of God, and heir of glory. Nor should we be too confident that such may not be our case. We should be thankful for present exemptions, and learn to sympathize with others in distress.

Ver. 23—29. *Job's declaration of his belief in the resurrection.*

The Spirit of God, at this time, seems to have powerfully wrought on the mind of Job. He had appeared ready to despair, but here he witnessed a good confession; declared the soundness of his faith, and the assurance of his hope. He seemed to emerge from his temptations in the extremity of his afflictions, even as the expiring Jesus, when the gloom of his inward sufferings was over, exclaimed, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Some observe, that, after this, we do not find such strong complaints of God and his providence as before. This hope quieted his spirit, stilled the storm, and, having here cast anchor within the veil, his mind was kept more steady from this time forward. He began by solemn wishes that what he was about to utter might be recorded in the most public and lasting manner. In this God granted his desires; being written in the sacred scriptures, his words will continue to the end of time, and be known in all ages and nations. Here is much of Christ and heaven; and he that said such things as these, declared plainly that he sought the better country, that is, the heavenly, as the patriarchs of that age did, Heb. 11. 14, 16. We have here Job's confession of faith. We find him no stranger to revealed religion; though the revelation of the promised Seed, and the promised inheritance, was then discerned only like the dawning of the day, yet Job was taught of God to believe in a living Redeemer; to look for the resurrection of

the dead, and the life of the world to come; for these he comforted himself with the expectation of, and not deliverance from his trouble, or revival of his happiness, in this world.

"I know," says Job, "that my Redeemer liveth." The promised Seed, who was to bear the nature and to be the Redeemer of man, evidently was intended. Job was now accused, and this was his appeal. How easily may we bear the unjust calumnies and reproaches of men, while we expect the glorious appearance of our Redeemer, and his redeemed, at the last day; and that there will then be a resurrection of names, as well as bodies!

Job was assured that this Redeemer of sinners from the yoke of Satan, and the condemnation of sin, was his Redeemer; he knew that he embraced the promise of his coming, and expected salvation through him—a living Redeemer, though not yet come in the flesh; according to the words of Jesus, "Before Abraham was, I AM." He believed also that in the fulness of time he would appear to crush the serpent's head, while his own heel should be bruised; that after his resurrection he would stand up as the first fruits of them that sleep in the dust of the earth; and that at the last day he would appear as the Judge of the world, to raise the dead, and to complete the redemption of his people. The gospel-day is called the last time, because that is the last dispensation upon the earth: so it points at his incarnation; or, He shall be lifted up from the earth; so it points at his crucifixion; or, raised up out of the earth; so it is applicable to his resurrection, as we commonly understand it. At the end of time, Christ shall appear, for he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him. He shall stand upon the dust, so the word is, upon all his enemies, which shall be put as dust under his feet; and he shall tread upon them, and triumph over them.

Observe here, that there is a Redeemer provided for fallen man, and Jesus Christ is that Redeemer. The word is Goel, which is used for the next of kin, to whom, by the law of Moses, the right of redeeming an estate did belong, Lev. 25. 25. Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin; we are ourselves utterly unable to redeem it; Christ is near of kin to us, the Kinsman who is able to redeem; for he has paid our debt, and satisfied God's justice for sin.

As to Job, though his body would be consumed, yet he should be again raised from the dead, and behold his God and Saviour. Him he should certainly behold "for himself," as his portion and happiness; in his own body, and not in another. All this he firmly believed, though consumed by disease, and despairing of recovery in this world.

Thus the believer can never be left wholly comfortless. There is a Friend who loveth at all times, and a Brother who is born for adversity. The long expected Redeemer hath once stood upon earth in human nature as our Brother, and our Surety, to ransom our souls by his precious blood. Our persons want a Redeemer; we are sold for sin, and sold under sin; our Lord Jesus has wrought out a redemption for us, and proclaims redemption to us, and so he is truly the Redeemer. We are assured that in heaven he ever liveth to make intercession for us; and at the last day he will again appear to raise the dead, and judge the world.

It is good for us often to think, not only of the approaching death of our bodies, but of their dissolution in the grave; yet let not that discourage our hope of their resurrection, for the same power that made man's body at first, out of common dust, can raise it out of its own dust. This body which we now take such care about, and make such provision for, will, in a little time, be destroyed. But soul and body shall come together again. That body which must be destroyed in the grave, shall be raised again a glorious body, fit for the employments and entertainments of that world; and therefore a spiritual body, 1 Cor. 15. 44. Let us therefore glorify God with our bodies, because there is such a glory designed for them. It is the blessedness of the blessed that they shall see God, shall see him as he is, see him face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly. With what pleasure holy Job enlarges upon this. Let us then give diligence, that we may be assured Christ is our Redeemer, and that we shall be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting. May these faithful sayings be engraven by the Holy Spirit upon the tablets of our hearts, that our assured faith and hope may unite with love and gratitude to produce devoted obedience and submission to the Lord. This spake comfort to Job, but warning to them that set themselves against him.

Job's remark, as to the "root of the matter" being found in him, directs us, 1. In our care concerning ourselves. We are all concerned to see to it, that the root of the matter be found in us. A living, quickening, commanding principle of grace in the heart, is the root of the matter; as necessary to our religion as the root to the tree, to which it owes both its fixedness and its fruitfulness. Love to God and our brethren, faith in Christ, hatred of sin—these are the root of the matter; other things are but leaves in comparison with this; serious godliness is the one thing needful. 2. In our conduct toward our brethren. We are to believe that many have the root of the matter in them, who are not in every thing of our mind, who have their follies, and weaknesses, and mistakes; and, to conclude, it is at our peril if we persecute any such. Job and his friends differed in some notions concerning the methods of Providence, but they agreed in the root of the matter, the belief of another world, and therefore should not persecute one another for these differences. Christ's second coming will be very dreadful to those that are found smiting their fellow servants, Matt. 24. 49. Good men need to be deterred from sin by the terrors of the Almighty, particularly from the sin of rashly judging their brethren, Matt. 7. 1; Jam. 3. 1. There is a future judgment, in which hard speeches must be accounted for.

24. In ancient times, before the use of paper, writing was sometimes engraved upon plates of lead, and inscriptions of considerable length were often engraved upon rocks. For these purposes an iron graver or pen would be requisite.

28. "When ye would say, 'How shall we persecute him?' And a ground of accusation is invented against me."—*Fry*. See marginal reading.

CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1-9. *Zophar again speaks of the short joy of the wicked.*

Zophar here again attacks Job with as much vehemence as before. His discourse is long, and all upon the certain misery of wicked people, and the ruin that awaits them. He seems to have interrupted Job's discourse without taking notice of the excellent things he had spoken. They are frequently most forward to dispute that are in the wrong. We are pleased with our own thoughts as with our own children, and think that others will equally admire them.

High spirits are impatient of contradiction; they cannot bear a check, but they

call it the check of their reproach, and think they are bound to return it. His own heart gave him a strong instigation. Men often mistake the dictates of their passion for the dictates of their reason.

Zophar proceeds very plainly to show the ruin and destruction of wicked people, insinuating that because Job was destroyed and ruined, he was certainly a wicked man, and a hypocrite. Observe, ever since man was made, he has had this truth written in his heart, that the sin of sinners will be their ruin; and ever since there were instances of wickedness, which there were soon after man was placed on the earth, there were instances of the punishments of it; witness the exclusions of Adam and Cain. When sin entered into the world, death entered with it. Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, sooner or later, Isa. 3. 11.

The triumph of the wicked and the joy of the hypocrite are fleeting; they will shortly perish disgracefully, and for ever. The pleasures and gains of sin bring disease and pain; they end in remorse, anguish, and ruin. Dissembled piety is double iniquity, and the ruin that attends it will be accordingly. He grants that wicked men may, for a time, prosper; but he lays it down for a certain truth, that they will not prosper long. He is confident that their ruin will, accordingly, be very great, and their fall the more dreadful for their having risen so high.

Ver. 10-22. *Zophar describes the ruin of the wicked.*

The instances here given of the miserable condition of the wicked man in this world, are expressed with great fullness of language. Observe, What his wickedness is, for which he is punished.

1. The lusts of the flesh, here called the sins of his youth. The forbidden pleasures of sense are said to be sweet in his mouth; he indulges himself in the gratifications of the carnal appetite. That is the satisfaction which he hides under his tongue, and rolls there, as a dainty delicate morsel. ~~Let him~~ ^{Let him} have that, and he desires no more; he will never part with that for the spiritual and Divine pleasures of religion, which he has no relish of, nor affection for. His sleeping it still in his mouth, denotes ~~Job's~~ ^{his} obstinate persisting in his sin, he spares it when he should kill and mortify it, and forsakes it not, but holds it fast, and goes on frowardly in it, and also his reacting of his sin, by

revolving it, and remembering it with pleasure. Or his hiding it and keeping it under his tongue, denotes industrious concealment of his beloved lust: being a hypocrite, that he may save the credit of his profession, he has secret haunts of sin. But He who knows what is in the heart, knows what is under the tongue too, and will discover it.

2. The love of the world and the wealth of it; in that he places his happiness, and therefore he sets his heart upon it. See here how greedy he is of it, what pains he takes for it; not by honest diligence in a lawful calling, but by an unwearied prosecution of all ways and methods, right or wrong, to be rich. We must labour, not to be rich, Prov. 23. 4, but to be charitable, that we may have to give, Eph. 4. 28, not to spend. What great things he promises himself from it, are intimated, ver. 17, he had flattered himself with the hopes of them: he expected rivers of sensual delights.

3. Violence and oppression, and injustice to his poor neighbours. This sin, as much as any other, brings God's judgments upon nations and families. It is charged upon this wicked man, that he has forsaken the poor, taken no care of them, showed no kindness to them. That he has oppressed them, taken all advantages against them: to enrich himself, he has made the poor poorer. He has violently taken that which he had no right to. Observe his punishment for this.

1. He shall be disappointed in his expectations, and shall not find that satisfaction in his worldly wealth, which he promised himself. The world is not that to those who love it, and court it, and admire it, which they fancy it will be.

2. He shall be diseased and distempered in his body; and how little comfort a man has in riches, if he has not health! This wicked man has all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable; but what real happiness can he enjoy, when his bones are full of the sins of his youth, that is, of the effects of those sins? By them, when he was young, he contracted diseases, which are painful to him long after. He is likely to carry his pains and diseases with him to the grave, or rather, they are likely to carry him thither, and the sin of sinners follows to their death.

3. He shall be troubled and troubled in his mind. Even that wickedness which

was sweet in the commission, and was rolled under the tongue as a delicate morsel, becomes bitter in the reflection, and, when it is reviewed, fills him with horror and vexation. In his bowels, it is turned. Such is sin; it is turned into gall, than which nothing is more bitter; it will prove to him poison, so will all unlawful gains be. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits, that is, he shall think himself so, through the anxieties of his own mind.

4. He shall sink and dwindle away to nothing. He shall not only never rejoice truly, but not long rejoice at all. If he do not himself restore what he has violently taken away, God shall, by his providence, bring it about, one way or other, that ill-gotten goods shall return to the right owners. To be made to restore what was unjustly gotten, by the sanctifying grace of God, as Zaccheus was, is a great mercy. But to be forced to restore, as Judas was, merely by the horrors of a despairing conscience, has none of that benefit and comfort attending it.

Ver. 23—29. *The portion of the wicked.*

Zophar, having described the embarrassments and vexations which commonly attend the wicked practices of oppressors and cruel men, shows their ruin at last.

Their ruin will take its rise from God's wrath and vengeance. There is no fence against this, but in Christ, who is the only Covert from the storm and tempest; Isa. 32. 2. This wrath shall be cast upon them when they are secure and easy, and in no apprehension of danger.

Their ruin will be inevitable, and there will be no possibility of escaping it. Flight argues guilt: they will not humble themselves under the judgments of God, nor seek peace with him; all their care is to escape the vengeance that pursues them, but in vain. God has weapons of all sorts, he can deal with his enemies at hand, or afar off. He that is marked for ruin, though he escape one judgment, will find another ready for him.

It will be a total, terrible ruin. What terrors are upon him! How terrible are the arrests of death to a wicked man! Sometimes it is a ruin that comes upon him insensibly. The darkness he is wrapped up in is a hidden darkness: it is all darkness, utter darkness; he never retires into his own conscience but he finds himself in the dark, and utterly at a loss. The fire he is consumed by, is a fire

not blown, kindled without noise, a consumption which every body sees the effect of, but nobody sees the cause of. He is wasted, surely, but slowly. When the fuel is very combustible, the fire needs no blowing, and that is his case; he is ripe for ruin. An unquenchable fire shall consume him, so some read it; and that is certainly true of hell-fire. It is a ruin, not only to himself, but to his family; The increase of his house shall depart.

It is a ruin which will manifestly appear to be just and righteous; what he has brought upon himself by his own wickedness. God, who sees all the secret wickedness of the wicked, will let all the world know what a base man he has been, that they may own the justice of God. If the God of heaven and earth be his enemy, neither heaven nor earth will show him any kindness.

Zophar concludes, This is the portion of a wicked man from God; it is allotted him, it is designed him, as his portion. He will have it at last, as a child has his portion, and he will have it for a perpetuity; it is the settled rule of God's judgment, and fair warning is given of it. Though impenitent sinners do not always fall under such temporal judgments as are here described, therein Zophar was mistaken, yet the wrath of God abides upon them, and they are made miserable by spiritual judgments, which are much worse. Their consciences are either a terror to them, and then they are in continual amazement, or seared and silenced, and then they are given up to a reprobate mind, and bound over to eternal ruin. Never was any doctrine better explained, or worse applied, than this by Zophar, who intended to prove Job a hypocrite. Let us receive the good explication, and make a better application, for warning to ourselves, to stand in awe, and sin not.

How unkind and unjust were the reasonings of Zophar as directed personally to Job. How much sweeter is that short but decisive passage of God by the prophet; Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked; it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him, Isa. 3. 10, 11. Let us learn properly to estimate these things. Whenever sinful staggerings arise at any of the little exercises we are called to, let us be looking to

holy men gone before, but especially to the Lord Jesus Christ. One view of Jesus, directed by the Holy Spirit, and by him suitably impressed upon our souls, will quell a thousand carnal reasonings on the subject of the exercises of the faithful. Like the apostle, we shall be enabled to reckon that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us, Rom. 8. 18.—(37.)

CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1—6. *Job entreats attention.*

This is Job's reply to Zophar's discourse; in which he complains less of his own miseries than in his former discourses, and comes closer to the general question that was in dispute betwixt him and them—Whether outward prosperity, and the continuance of it, were a mark of the true church, and the true members of it, so that the ruin of a man's prosperity is sufficient to prove him a hypocrite, though no other evidence appear against him? This they asserted, but Job denied.

Job entreated their attention, and that they would not misunderstand his words. If you have no other comforts to administer to me, yet deny me not this; be so kind, so just, as to give me a patient hearing. If after a fair hearing, his discourse was found not to be to the purpose, then they might continue their contempt and mockery. His complaint and appeal were directed to God, not to them, otherwise he might well be troubled at their sarcasms and reproaches. If they looked upon him they might see misery enough to demand their compassion, and their bold interpretations of this mysterious providence should be turned into silent astonishment.

God's way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters. When we cannot account for what he does, in suffering the wicked to prosper, and the godly to be afflicted, nor fathom the depth of those proceedings, it becomes us to sit down and admire them. Upright men shall be astonished at this, ch. 17. 8. Be you so. Ver. 7—16. *The prosperity and impiety of the wicked.*

Job's friends had been very full in describing the miserable condition of a wicked man in this world; It is true, says Job in reply, remarkable judgments are sometimes brought upon notorious sinners, but not always; for we have many instances of the great and long

prosperity of those that are openly wicked; and though they are hardened in their wickedness by their prosperity, yet they are still suffered to prosper.

He here describes their prosperity. Now wherefore is it so? It is worth while to inquire into the reasons of the outward prosperity of wicked people. It is not because God has forsaken the earth, because he does not see, or does not hate, or cannot punish their wickedness; but it is because the measure of their iniquities is not full. This is the day of God's patience, and, in some way or other, he makes use of them and their prosperity, to serve his own counsels, while it ripens them for ruin; but the chief reason is, because he will make it to appear there is another world, which is the world of retribution, and not this.

The prosperity of the wicked is here described to be complete. They are multiplied, and their family is built up. They are easy and quiet. They are rich, and thrive in their estates. Their children are trained up in vanity, sensuality, and dissipation. They live to the end in outward ease and indulgence, and die without any remarkable pain or distress.

Job shows how they abuse their prosperity; and are confirmed and hardened by it in their impiety. God suffers them to prosper, but let us not wonder, for the prosperity of fools destroys them, by hardening them in sin, Prov. 1. 32; Ps. 73. 7.

See how light these prospering sinners make of God and religion, as if because they have so much of this world, they had no need to look after another. The world is the portion they have chosen, and take up with, and think themselves happy in; while they have that, they can live without God. They that are resolved not to walk in God's ways, desire not to know them; knowledge will be a continual reproach to their disobedience, John 3. 19.

See how they argue against God and religion. Observe how slightly they speak of God. How hardly they speak of religion! They call it a service, they mean a hard service! Observe also how highly they speak of themselves; That we should serve him: we, who are rich and mighty in power, shall we be subject and accountable to him? No, we are lords, Jer. 2. 31. They will not believe it is their interest to be religious. All the world are for what they can get, and wisdom's merchandise is neglected, because

they think there is nothing to be got by it. Perhaps serious godliness may hinder a man's preferment, and expose him to losses. But is nothing to be called gain but the wealth and honour of this world? If we obtain the favour of God, and spiritual and eternal blessings, we have no reason to complain of losing by our religion. If we have not profit by prayer, it is our own fault, Isa. 58. 3, 4; it is because we ask amiss, Jam. 4. 3. Religion itself is not a vain thing. If it be so to us, we may thank ourselves for resting in the outside of it, Jam. 1. 26. Job shows their folly, and disclaims all concurrence with them.

Ver. 17—26. *The various dealings of God's providence towards men.*

Job had largely described the prosperity of wicked people; in these verses he opposes this to what his friends had maintained concerning their certain ruin in this life. How often do you see their destruction come upon them, or God distributing sorrows in his anger among them? Do you not as often see their mirth and prosperity continuing to the last? Perhaps there are as many instances of notorious sinners ending their days in pomp, as ending them in misery; which is sufficient to do away their arguments against Job, and to show that no certain judgment can be made of men's character by their outward condition.

He reconciles this to the holiness and justice of God. Even while they prosper thus, they are as chaff. They are light and worthless, and of no account either with God, or with wise and good men. They are fitted to destruction, and continually lie exposed to it; in the height of their pomp and power, there is but a step between them and ruin. Perhaps he may not now be made to fear the wrath that is to come, but he may flatter himself with hopes that he shall have peace, though he go on; but he shall be made to feel it in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. They will not see, but they shall see, Isa. 26. 11. His eyes that have been wilfully shut against the face of God, shall be opened to see his destruction. The misery of damned sinners is here set forth in a few words, but they are very terrible ones. If this will be his condition in the other world; what good will his prosperity in this world do him? Our Saviour has let us know how little pleasure the rich man in hell had in his house after him, when the remembrance

of the good things he had received in his life-time; would not cool his tongue, but added much to his misery, Luke 16. 25-28. So little will the gain of the world profit him that has lost his soul.

Job resolves this difference which Providence makes between one wicked man and another, into the wisdom and sovereignty of God. Shall he be accountable to us, or receive advice from us? He is the Judge of all the earth, and he shall do right, Gen. 18. 25; Rom. 3. 6; those proceedings of his providence which seem to contradict one another, he can make jointly to serve his own purposes. The little difference there is between one wicked man dying impenitent in peace and pomp, and another dying so in pain and misery, when both will at last meet in hell, he illustrates by the little difference there is between one man dying suddenly and another dying slowly, when they will both meet shortly in the grave. So vast is the disproportion between time and eternity, that if hell be the lot of every sinner at last, it makes little difference if one goes singing thither, and another sighing. One dies suddenly, in full strength, not weakened by age or sickness. It is common for persons to be taken away by death when in their full strength, when they least expect death, and think themselves best armed against it. Let us therefore be always ready. Another dies slowly, and with a great deal of previous pain and misery, in the bitterness of his soul. What great reason have those to be thankful that are in health, and always eat with pleasure! And what little reason have they to complain who sometimes do not eat thus, when they hear of many that never do!

How undiscernible this difference is in the grave! If one wicked man die in a palace, and another in a dungeon, they will meet in the congregation of the dead and damned; the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched, will be the same to them, which makes differences in this world inconsiderable, and not worth perplexing ourselves about.

Ver. 27-34. *The judgment of the wicked is in the world to come.*

In these verses Job opposes the opinion of his friends, That the wicked are sure to fall into visible and remarkable ruin, and none but the wicked; upon which principle they condemned Job as wicked.

Job's friends were ready to say, Where

is Job's house? inquire into the circumstances of Job's family, and then you will see that Job's house is in the same predicament with the houses of tyrants and oppressors, and may therefore conclude that doubtless he was such a one. But Job appeals to the observations of all mankind. So confident is he that he is in the right, that he is willing to refer the cause to the next man that comes by, ver. 29. Turn to whom you will, you will find that the punishment of sinners is designed more for the other world than for this, Jude 14. Do you not know the tokens of this truth, which all that have made any observations upon the providences of God concerning mankind in this world, can furnish you with?

Job here asserts:

1. That impenitent sinners will certainly be punished in the other world, and usually their punishment is put off until then. 2. That therefore we are not to think it strange if they prosper in this world, and fall under no visible token of God's wrath. The sinner is here supposed to live in a great deal of power, so that none dares declare his way to his face. But there is a day coming when those shall be told of their faults, who now would not bear to hear of them; shall have their sins set in order before them, and their way declared, to their everlasting confusion, who would not have it done here, to their conviction.

The sinner is buried in a great deal of pomp and magnificence. He must die; that is the lot of all; but every thing shall be done to take off the reproach of death. He shall have a splendid funeral: a poor thing for any man to be proud of the prospect of! He shall have a stately monument erected over him, he shall remain in the tomb with a large encomium. The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him; there shall be as much done as can be to take off the noisomeness of the grave, but odours and decorations all are mere vain distinctions. Death closes his prosperity.

Job concluded by inquiring why they comforted him in vain, with hopes of returning worldly prosperity, in case he repented and sought the Lord. For there was no truth in the system whence they drew that inference; nay, there was falsehood in their answers, so that they did not apply to the subject. Where there is not truth, little comfort is to be expected.

Comfort only springs from truth; a

man that speaks the truths of God's word speaks to comfort and edification ; but he that brings error and falsehood never can be the means or instrument of true, solid comfort to any.—(27.)

It is plain that Job speaks figuratively when he ascribes the sense and affections of a living man to a dead body. The sum of all may be this, He shall have the utmost ease that any man can have in death. He shall feel no more trouble nor pain there ; he shall be free from care and fear when gotten thither. The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him.—(15.)

It is but a poor encouragement to die, that others have died before us ! That which makes a man die with true courage, and step with holy boldness into the grave, is believingly to remember that Jesus Christ died and lay in the grave, not only *before* us but *for* us ; that He hath conquered the king of terrors upon his own ground—the grave ! It is enough to make us cheerful in death to know savingly that *this One* is gone before us. Christ's going thither before us is a spiritual and prevailing argument. They who lived before Christ died in the flesh, might comfort themselves against the fear of death by believing the holy prophecies that He should die for them—much more may we, by believing the holy history of his death. That He hath gone before us and died for us, who is alive and liveth for us, is consolation indeed in the hour of death.—(15.)

33. A valley with springs of water to keep the turf always green, was accounted a happy burial place among the Arabians.—*Greenfield.*

CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1—4. *Eliphaz shows that a man's goodness profits not God.*

Eliphaz here insinuates that, because Job complained so much of his afflictions, he thought God was unjust in afflicting him ; but Job was far from thinking so. What Eliphaz says here, is unjustly applied to Job, but it is very true that when God does us good, it is not because he is indebted to us.

Man's piety is no *profit* to God, no gain. Eliphaz here asks, whether any man can possibly be profitable to God. It is certain that man cannot. But he that is wise may be profitable to himself. Our wisdom and piety are that by which we ourselves are, and are likely to be great gainers, 1 Tim. 4. 8 ; Prov. 9. 12.

The gains of religion are infinitely greater than the losses of it, and so it will appear when they are balanced. But such is the perfection of God, that he cannot receive any benefit or advantage by men. And such is the weakness and imperfection of man, that he cannot offer any benefit or advantage to God. God needs not us or our services. We are undone, for ever undone, without him ; but he is happy, for ever happy, without us.

A wise man consults his own advantage by serving God, but cannot profit or merit aught of him. The Lord indeed approves and delights in holiness, because it is right, and promotes happiness, but not that he is any gainer thereby. All our comforts flow from the unmerited mercy of God ; and under all our afflictions we suffer less than we deserve. God acts as a sovereign who gives no account of his conduct ; but his sovereignty is perfectly wise, just, faithful, good, and merciful. He approves the image of his own holiness, and delights in the fruits of his Spirit ; he graciously accepts the thankful services of the humble believer, while he rejects the proud claim of the self-confident pharisee.

Ver. 5—14. *Eliphaz accuses Job of oppression.*

Eliphaz in these verses brought particular charges against Job, as if he had evidences to prove them ; yet he had no reason for his accusations, except that Job was visited, as he supposed God always visited every wicked man, and none else. We have all committed innumerable sins, but Eliphaz meant flagrant iniquities and impieties, which Job had cloaked with hypocrisy. He charges him with oppression and injustice ; that when he was in prosperity, he not only did no good with his wealth and power, but did a great deal of hurt with it. This was utterly false, as appears by the account Job gives of himself, ch. 29. 2, &c. and the character God gave of him, ch. 1.

He attributes all his present troubles to these supposed sins. He charges him with atheism, infidelity, and gross impiety ; and thought this was at the bottom of his injustice and oppressiveness. He that did not fear God, did not regard man. He would have it thought that Job did indeed own the being of God, but denied his providence, and fancied that he never concerned himself in the inhabitants and affairs of the world. So that if he were not a direct atheist, he

had denied the Divine perfections and providence, therefore he feared no punishment for cloaking his injustice with the show of piety; and persevered in the same plan by vindicating his character when visited by the just judgments of God.

Ver. 15—20. *Eliphaz compares Job's case to that of the world before the flood.*

Eliphaz here evidently spoke of the flood. The earth was then filled with violence, men had said unto God, Depart from us; and they inquired concerning Noah and the few with him, What can the Almighty do for them? But they were cut down by an awful judgment, and the foundation of their confidence was overflowed and destroyed with the flood. Therefore Eliphaz maintained that such judgments befall notorious sinners. But, added he, our substance, who are really godly men, is not thus cut down; while the vengeance of God, like fire, consumes every remnant of those who, by their crimes, are proper fuel for it.

Eliphaz would have Job to mark the old way which wicked men have trodden, and see what came of it, what the end of their way was. There is an old way which wicked men have trodden. Religion had but newly entered, when sin immediately followed it: but though it is an old way, a broad way, a tracked way, it is a dangerous way, and it leads to destruction. It is good for us to mark it, that we may not dare to walk therein. Observe the sin of those sinners, which brought that ruin, They said unto God, Depart from us. Job had spoken of some who said so, and yet prospered, ch. 21. 14. But these did not, says Eliphaz; they found what it was to set God at defiance. Those who resolve to lay the reins on the neck of their appetites and passions, begin with this; they say unto God, Depart; they abandon all religion, hate the thoughts of it, and desire to live without God in the world; they shun his word, and silence conscience! And what will ever be found the result? Those who will not submit to God's golden sceptre, must expect to be broken to pieces with his iron rod.

The same rule that served Eliphaz to condemn Job, served him to magnify himself and his companions. His substance is cut down, therefore he is a wicked man; ours is not, therefore we are righteous. But this is a deceitful rule to judge by; for none knows love or hatred

by all that is before him. If others be consumed and we are not, instead of censuring them, and lifting up ourselves, as Eliphaz does here, we ought to be thankful to God, and take it for a warning to prepare ourselves for the like calamities.

Ver. 21—30. *Eliphaz exhorts Job to repentance, with promises of mercy.*

This conclusion of the answer of Eliphaz implied that Job had hitherto been unacquainted with God, and that temporal prosperity would be the consequence of his sincere conversion. However, it contains excellent advice, and suitable encouragements. The counsel which Eliphaz here gives to Job is good counsel to us all, though, as to Job, it was built upon a false supposition that he was a wicked man, a stranger and enemy to God.

"Acquaint now thyself with God." We must get the knowledge of him, fix our affections on him, and keep up a constant correspondence with him in the ways he has appointed. It is our honour that we are made capable of this acquaintance; our misery, that by sin we have lost it; our privilege, that through Christ we are invited to return to it; and it will be our unspeakable happiness to contract and cultivate this acquaintance.

"Be at peace," at peace with thyself; let not thy heart be troubled, but be quiet, and calm, and well-composed. Be at peace with thy God; be reconciled to him. Do not carry on this unholy war. This is the great concern of every one of us; and this we must do quickly; now, before it is too late. God himself beseeches us; ministers, in Christ's stead, pray us to be reconciled. Can we gainsay such entreaties?

"Receive the law from his mouth." Which way soever we receive the intimations of his will, whether he speaks by scripture, ministers, conscience, or providence, we must take the word as from his mouth, and bow our souls to it.

"Lay up his word in thine heart." It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it, Prov. 3. 18. We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe: and we must lay it up in our hearts, as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion.

"Return to the Almighty." Do not only turn from sin, but turn to God and thy duty. Do not only turn toward the Almighty in some good inclinations and good beginnings, but return to him;

return home to him, quite to him, by an effectual thorough change of heart and life, and a firm resolution to cleave to him.

"Put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle." Put iniquity far off, the further the better, not only from thy heart and hand, but from thy house. Not only be not wicked thyself, but reprove and restrain sin in those that are under thy chafge. Family reformation is needful reformation; we and our house must serve the Lord, Josh. 24. 15.

Thus Job was exhorted to return to the service of God, removing every kind of iniquity from him. Then he might expect to have prosperity built on a firm foundation. The Lord would be his treasure and defence; his prayers would be heard and answered, his path would be comfortable, he would become a blessing to his country.

It is painful to hear men cloak their own injustice and severity, by enlarging upon the Divine justice and clemency. Let us beware of slandering our brethren, and if it be our lot to suffer in this manner, let us remember how Job was treated; yea, how Jesus was reviled; that we may be patient under the trial, and not revile in turn. And let us examine ourselves whether there may not be some colour for the slander, and let us walk more watchfully, to be clear of all appearances of evil.

Blessed be God, we have his precepts, his promises, his law and his gospel in our hands. May we receive them as the words of his mouth, and treasure them up in our hearts, returning unto him by repentance and faith, and showing the reality of our conversion by our conduct. Then, whatever we are in outward things, the Almighty will be our shield and delight. Having been humbled under his mighty hand, we shall be exalted to the throne of glory. In the mean time, our example and influence will be useful, and whatever may be our judgment of others, we may recommend the same course to them, as the way to peace and happiness.

30. The word *ai*, translated island, means house or habitation.—*Parkhurst*. It is strictly Arabic, and in that language has that import.—*Good*.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1-7. *Job complains that God has withdrawn from him.*

Job here justifies his own resentments and representations of his trouble. Our

bitter complaints are apt to savour of rebellion; we should be careful we do not provoke the Lord to increase his corrections. He appeals from the censures of his friends to the just judgment of God. He is impatient to have his cause tried quickly. The apostle found it necessary to press it much upon suffering christians, patiently to expect the Judge's coming, James 5. 7-9.

Blessed be God, we may know where to find him. He is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; and upon a mercy-seat, waiting to be gracious. Thither the sinner may come; and there the believer may order his cause before him, with arguments taken from his promises, his covenant, and his glory. We never need be at a loss for an argument why he should pardon, relieve, comfort, and help us, while trusting in his mercy, and seeking his glory. He will answer our inquiries by his word, and our prayers in his providence; causing us to understand and approve his decisions. He will not crush us by his power, but will assist us by his grace, and teach us that the only way to be delivered from Him as our offended Judge, is to appeal to his mercy as our loving Saviour.

A patient waiting for death and judgment is our wisdom and duty, and if we duly consider, it cannot be without a holy fear and trembling. A passionate wishing for death or judgment, without any such fear and trembling, is our sin and folly, and ill becomes us. Do we know what death and judgment are, and are we so very ready for them, that we do not need time to get more ready? Amos 5. 18.

Job is so sure of the goodness of his own cause, that he longs to be opening it at God's bar. We may apply this to the duty of prayer, in which we have boldness to enter into the holiest, and to come even to the footstool of the throne of grace. Those that are delivered up to God as their Owner and Ruler, shall be for ever delivered from him as their Judge and Avenger: and there is no flying from his justice, but by flying to his mercy.

Ver. 8-12. *God observes our ways; Job asserts his own integrity.*

Job knew that the Lord was every where present; (he was troubled at this, ver. 15;) but his mind was in such confusion that he could get no fixed view of his merciful presence, so as to obtain comfort and support by spreading his

case before him. His views were all gloomy. He could discern the powerful working of God, but his gracious presence was hid; in his providence he seemed to stand at a distance, and frown upon him. Yet Job expressed his assurance that he should be brought forth, tried and approved, for he had obeyed the precepts of God, and had steadily kept that path. He had relished and delighted in the truths and commandments of God, more than in his necessary food.

Here we should notice that Job justified himself rather than—in opposition to God, ch. 32. 2. He meant not that he was exempt from our original corruption. His friends had charged him with deserving his punishment on account of transgressions. For they maintained that Providence in this life had strict regard to the comparative righteousness of one, and the actual transgressions of another. Their principles were right in a general view, but sin might be in other things than those they had suggested as the cause of Job's calamities. Job might feel that he was clear from the charges they had suggested, but boldly to assert that though visited by the hand of God, it was not a chastisement of sin—here was his error. And he is guilty of a second, when, to maintain this point, and overturn their inference, he denies altogether that there are dispensations of Providence over men in this present life—that the injured find redress, and the evil are visited for their sins.—(25.)

There is no condemnation for them who are true believers in Jesus Christ. They may have temptations and sorrows, they may lose the sense of God's favour, and for a time seek it in vain. But they that keep the way of the Lord, may comfort themselves, when in affliction, that they are but tried; it is not for their hurt, but it is the trial of their faith, 1 Pet. 1. 7. When sufficiently tried, they shall come forth out of the furnace, and not be left to consume in it. The trial will have an end; God will not contend for ever. That they shall come forth as gold, pure in itself, and precious to the refiner: they shall come forth as gold approved and improved; found to be good, and made to be better. Afflictions are to us, as we are; those that go gold into the furnace, will come out no worse. The word of God is to our souls, as our necessary food to our bodies; it sustains the spiri-

tual life, and strengthens us for the actions of life; we cannot subsist without it, nothing else can make up the want of it: we ought therefore so to esteem it, to take pains for it, hunger after it, feed upon it with delight, and nourish our souls with it; and this will be our rejoicing in the day of evil, as it was Job's here.

Ver. 13-17. *Job complains of the Divine terrors.*

As Job does not once question but that his visitation is from the hand of God, and that there is no such thing as chance, how does he account for it? The principle on which he views it is—that the hope and reward of the faithful servants of God is laid up in another life; and with respect to the notoriously wicked he maintains it is plain to all, that they are not treated according to their deserts in this life, but often directly the reverse. In reply therefore to the last speaker, Job answers, ver. 13, 14, Though I am confident that I have been an obedient servant, yet I cannot think by my prayers and entreaties to alter the purposes of God, or his predeterminations concerning my lot in this present life.—(25.)

But though "the obtaining of mercy," the first fruits of the Spirit of grace, pledged an unchangeable God, "in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," and who will certainly finish the work which he has begun; yet the afflicted believer is not to conclude that because God has begun to afflict him in an extraordinary manner, all prayer and entreaty will be in vain, and that he should sink into despair, and "faint when he is reproved of him." He cannot tell but the intention of God in afflicting him may be to produce penitence and prayer in his heart; and that deliverance and every blessing is laid up with him as the answer to that prayer. We are in some measure guilty of Job's error when we faint in the day of adversity; and despair of help silences our prayers before God.—(25.)

Nothing can come upon us but what is appointed by infinite Wisdom and Love; nothing on the children of God but to humble and sanctify them, nothing but what shall issue in their benefit and to the glory of God; and which, in their sober judgment, they would be willing to endure for such purposes. May we then learn to obey and trust the Lord, even under tribulation; to live or die as he pleases; as we know not for what good ends our lives may be shortened or prolonged.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1—12. *Wickedness often goes unpunished.*

Job, having given vent to his complaints in the foregoing chapter, now applies himself to a further discussion of the controversy concerning the prosperity of the wicked. That many live at ease who are ungodly and profane, he had showed, ch. 21. Here he goes further, and shows that many who live in open defiance to all the laws of justice, succeed in their unrighteous practices; and we do not see them reckoned with in this world. So that we cannot say, that all who are in trouble are wicked; as it is certain, that all who are in prosperity, are not righteous.

For the proof that wicked people prosper, he specifies two sorts of unrighteous ones, whom all the world saw thriving in their iniquity. 1. Those that do wrong under pretence of law and authority. Unjust rulers have often dispossessed men of their estates, seized upon their cattle and substance, and oppressed the orphans and widows. 2. Freebooters lived also in the wilderness by robbery; those that do wrong by force. Eliphaz had charged Job with such inhumanity as these commit. Job here tells him, there were those that were really guilty of those crimes with which he was unjustly charged who had success, the curse they laid themselves under, working invisibly.

The impunity of these oppressors and spoilers is expressed, ver. 12. Yet God layeth not folly to them, that is, he does not immediately prosecute them with his judgments for these crimes, nor make them examples, and so evince their folly to all the world. He that gets riches, and not by right, at his end shall be a fool, Jer. 17. 11. But while he prospers, he passes for a wise man, and God lays not folly to him until he saith, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, Luke 12. 20.

Ver. 13—17. *The wicked shun the light.*

Job here instances other criminals. Those that sin deliberately, with a great deal of plot and contrivance, using arts to conceal their villanies, fondly imagining that if they can but hide them from the eye of men, they are safe, but forgetting that there is no darkness or shadow of death, in which the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from God's eye, ch. 34. 22. Some conceal their crimes, as those before mentioned—outbrave them; such persons shun all inter-

course with the light. Thus the murderer lays wait, the adulterer secretly and in the dusk resorts to his evil practices; the housebreaker by night forces his way into houses. These all hate the approach of light; detection is as death to them.

See what care and pains wicked men take to compass their wicked designs, and let it shame us out of our negligence and slothfulness in doing good. See what pains those take, that make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it; pains to compass, and then to conceal, that which will be death and hell at last! Less pains would mortify and crucify the flesh, and be life and heaven at last.

Shame came in with sin, and everlasting shame is at the end of it. See the misery of sinners, they are exposed to continual frights; and yet see their folly, they are afraid of coming under the eye of men, but have no dread of God's eye, which is always upon them: they are not afraid of doing that, which yet they are so afraid of being known to do.

16. In the east the walls of houses are often of clay, and robbers literally dig through them.

Ver. 18—25. *There are judgments for the wicked.*

Job next instances the easy life, the quiet, perhaps honoured death of the profligate, though he had been an injurious oppressor. He seems to have an easy time; gliding smoothly down the current. Sometimes how gradual is the decay, how quiet the departure of such a person, how is he honoured, and how soon are all his cruelties and oppressions forgotten! Yet God has marked his iniquity; the prosperity of the wicked is but for a short time, any more than the depression of the just; for this life is short. We see no particular judgments in the time and circumstances of their removal; they die as all other men, and are taken off without distinction, as the harvest man gathers the ears of corn as they come to hand. To the hasty judgment of sense there will often appear much to countenance the view of Providence which Job takes in this chapter. Perhaps our observations on some occasions have almost led us to draw the same conclusions. But we are instructed by the word of inspiration, that these notions are formed in ignorance; from partial views. In truth, the present providence of God, in the affairs of men, is in every thing a just, wise, designing, and discriminating providence.—(25.)

It is a blessed resource, when beholding the seeming prosperity of the wicked, and the apparent misery of the righteous, to take shelter, not only in God's sovereignty, but in God's justice; being assured that, though unable to explain what we behold, all can be reconciled on his Divine principles of truth and justice. Reader, apply this doctrine in every difficult providence wherein the Lord may exercise you. He cannot do iniquity. The unequalled sorrows of the Son of God when on earth, unless looked at in this view, involve the mind in perplexity. But when we behold him, as the sinner's Surety, sustaining the curse, we can explain why he should endure that wrath which was due to sin, that Divine justice might be satisfied, the Divine law magnified, and everlasting righteousness brought in for the salvation of his people.—(37.)

CHAPTER XXV.

Bildad shows that man cannot be justified before God.

Bildad here drops the question concerning the prosperity of wicked men: but, because he thought Job had made too bold with the Divine majesty in his appeals to the Divine tribunal, he, in a few words, shows the infinite distance there is between God and man. He represents to Job some important truths which he had too much overlooked. He reminded him that the sovereign authority over all creatures belonged solely to God. All the inhabitants of heaven, in harmony obeyed his will. In heaven there is perfect peace; for there is perfect holiness, and there is God, who is love. He is Lord of all, Lord of hosts. He has numberless armies, and yet makes peace; he could make war upon us, but is willing to be at peace with us; the heavenly hosts were sent to proclaim peace on earth, and good will toward men, Luke 2. 14.

His providence extends itself to all; Upon whom does not his light arise? The light of the sun is communicated to all parts of the world, and, take the year round, to all equally: see Ps. 19. 6. That is a faint resemblance of the universal cognizance and care God takes of the whole creation, Matt. 5. 45. All are under the light of his knowledge, and are open before him. All partake of the light of his goodness: it seems especially to be meant of that. He is good to all; the earth is full of his goodness. Should

we not use his gifts to his glory, and imitate his kindness to the unthankful and evil? May the light of the gospel enlighten our souls, and shine upon all the nations on whom his sun arises. And as the light of his sun pervades all the earth, so all that partake of his goodness ought to submit to his authority. But if the heavenly bodies shine not when compared with his glory, and in his view of them, how can sinful man be approved as holy in his sight?

How then can man be justified with God? Man is not only mean, but vile; not only earthly, but filthy: he cannot be justified, he cannot be clean. In comparison with God, man's righteousness and holiness, at the best, are nothing to God's, Ps. 89. 6. In debate with God—he that will quarrel with the word and providence of God, must unavoidably have the worst. God will be justified, and then man will be condemned, Ps. 51. 4; Rom. 3. 4. There is no error in God's judgment, and therefore there lies no exception against it, nor appeal from it. In the sight of God—if God is so great and glorious, how can man, who is guilty and impure, appear before him? Man, by reason of his actual transgressions, is obnoxious to God's justice, and cannot in himself be justified before him: he cannot plead any merit of his own to balance or extenuate his guilt. The scripture has concluded all under sin. Man, by reason of his original corruption, is odious to God's holiness, and cannot be clean in his sight. Man is utterly unfit for communion and fellowship with God in grace here, and for the sight and enjoyment of Him in glory hereafter. We have need therefore to be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, and to be bathed again and again in the blood of Christ, that Fountain opened, Zech. 13. 1.

The children of men are before God but as worms of the earth. How much less does man shine in honour, how much less is he pure in righteousness, that is a worm; and the son of man, whoever he be, that is but a worm! So mean, and little, and inconsiderable, in comparison with God, and with the holy angels: so worthless and despicable, having his original in corruption, and hastening to corruption. What little reason has man then to be proud, and what great reason to be humble! So weak, and so easily crushed; therefore a very unequal match for Al-

mighty God. Shall man be such a fool as to contend with his Maker, who can tread him to pieces more easily than we can a worm? So sordid and filthy. Man is not pure, for he is a worm, hatched in putrefaction, and therefore odious to God. Let us wonder at God's condescension, in taking such worms as we are into covenant and communion with himself, especially at the condescension of the Son of God, in emptying himself so as to say, I am a worm, and no man, Ps. 22. 6.

We should be humbled as mean, guilty, polluted creatures, and renounce self-dependence. But even sinners may expect to be justified by faith, to be made holy by Divine grace, and to be exalted to glory in heaven, where the Lord himself will be our everlasting light. Our vileness will commend his condescension and love; the riches of his mercy and the power of his grace will be magnified by every redeemed sinner to all eternity.

5. The stars—the angels. In the parallel places angels and heavens are synonymes of stars in this place.—*Fry*.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1—4. *Job reproves Bildad.*

Job derided Bildad's answer; in his words we perceive a great mixture of peevishness and self-preference. ¶ If the most important truths are brought forward unseasonably, we may be derided for speaking wide of the subject, though we have said things worthy of being regarded. Disputants can hardly avoid aiming at victory more than improvement; what seems to one conclusive, will be ridiculed by the other. However, it is well when all agree to celebrate the praises, and extol the works of the Lord.

Bildad had pretended to convince, instruct, and comfort, but what he had said would not rectify any mistakes, nor assist him in bearing his afflictions, or in getting good by them. To one that was humbled, and broken, and grieved in spirit, as Job, he ought to have preached of the grace and mercy of God, rather than of his greatness and majesty; to have laid before him the consolations, rather than the terrors of the Almighty. Christ knows how to speak what is proper for the weary, Isa. 50. 4; and his ministers should learn rightly to divide the word of truth, and not make those sad, whom God would not have made sad. Therefore Job asks Bil-

dad, Whose spirit came from thee? that is, What troubled soul would ever be revived and relieved, and brought to itself, by such discourses as these? Thus are we often disappointed in our expectations from our friends who should comfort us, but the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, never mistakes in his operations, nor misses of his end.

Ver. 5—14. *Job acknowledges the power of God to be infinite.*

How does truth triumph, and how bright does it shine, when there appears no other strife between the contenders, than which shall speak most highly and honourably of God! It were well if all disputes about matters of religion might end thus, in glorifying God as Lord of all, and our Lord, with one mind and one mouth, Rom. 15. 6; for to that we have all attained, in that we are all agreed.

Many illustrious instances are here given of the wisdom and power of God, in the creation and preservation of the world. If we look about us, to the earth and waters here below, we shall see striking instances of omnipotence.

1. He hangeth the earth upon nothing. The vast terraqueous globe neither rests upon any pillars, nor hangs upon any axis, yet, by the almighty power of God, is firmly fixed in its place, poised with its own weight. The art of man could not hang a feather upon nothing, yet the Divine wisdom hangs the whole earth so! What is hung upon nothing, may serve us to set our feet on, and bear the weight of our bodies, but it will never serve us to set our hearts on, nor bear the weight of our souls.

2. He sets bounds to the waters of the sea; these shall continue unmoved, unshaken, till the day and night come to an end, when time shall be no more. Herein appears the dominion which Providence has over the raging waters of the sea, and so it is an instance of God's power, Jer. 5. 22. We see the care which Providence takes of the poor sinful inhabitants of the earth, who, though obnoxious to his justice, and lying at his mercy, are thus preserved from being overwhelmed, as they were once by the waters of a flood, and will continue to be so, because they are reserved unto fire.

3. He forms dead things under the waters. "Rephaim, giants," are formed under the waters, that is, vast creatures, of prodigious bulk, as whales, giant-like

creatures, among the innumerable inhabitants of the water.

4. By storms and tempests he shakes the mountains, which are here called the pillars of heaven; even divides the sea, and smites through its proud waves. A storm furrows the waters, and does, as it were, divide them; and then a calm smites through the waves, and lays them again: see Ps. 89. 9.

If we consider hell beneath, though out of our sight, yet we may conceive the instances of God's power there. By hell and destruction, we may understand the grave, and those who are buried in it; they are under the eye of God, though laid out of our sight, which may strengthen our belief of the resurrection of the dead. God knows where to find, and whence to bring all the scattered atoms of the consumed body. We may also consider it as the place of the damned, where the separate souls of the wicked are in everlasting misery and torment. That is hell and destruction, which are said to be before the Lord, Prov. 15. 11, and here to be naked before him, to which it is probable there is an allusion. Is there any thing in which the majesty of God appears more dreadful, than in the eternal ruin of the ungodly? Those that will not, with angels, fear and worship, shall for ever, with devils, fear and tremble; and God therein will be glorified.

If we look up to heaven above, we see instances of God's sovereignty and power.

1. He stretches out the north over the empty place. At first he stretched out the heavens like a curtain, Ps. 104. 2, and will do so till the general conflagration, when they shall be rolled together as a scroll, Rev. 6. 14. The air is the empty place over which it is stretched out: see Ps. 89. 12. What an empty place is this world, in comparison with the other!

2. He keeps the waters that are said to be above the firmament, from pouring down upon the earth, as once they did. He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, yet the cloud is not rent under them, but they do, as it were, distil and come by drops, in mercy to the earth, in rain as he pleases.

3. He conceals the glory of the upper world, the lustre of which we poor mortals could not bear. God will have us to live by faith, not by sense; for this is agreeable to a state of probation.

4. The ornaments of heaven are the

work of his hands. By his Spirit, the eternal Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters, the breath of his mouth, Ps. 33. 6, he has garnished the heavens, not only made them, but beautified them. If the visible heavens are so glorious, what are those that are out of sight?

Job acknowledges, with adoration, ver. 14, the discoveries that were made of God. But he admires the depth of that which is undiscovered. What we know of God, is nothing in comparison with what is in God, and what God is. After all the discoveries God has made to us, and all the inquiries we have made, we must conclude, Lo, these are but parts of his ways. Something we hear of him by his works, and by his word; but alas, how little a portion is heard of him! When we have said all we can concerning God, we must, even as St. Paul, Rom. 11. 33, despair to find the bottom; we must sit down at the brink, and adore the depth: Oh the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! It is but a little portion that we hear and know of God in our present state. He is infinite and incomprehensible; our understandings and capacities are weak and shallow, and the full discoveries of the Divine glory are reserved for the future state. Even the thunder of his power, that is, his powerful thunder, one of the lowest of his ways, here in our own region, we cannot understand. Much less can we understand the utmost force and extent of his power; the efforts and operations of it, particularly the power of his anger, Ps. 90. 11. God is great, and we know him not.

But in redemption all the other wonderful works of God are eclipsed. There we may draw near, and hear of his glory without dismay. We may come and taste of his grace, learn to love him, and walk with delight in his ways. To sinners, his grace and mercy are subjects of the deepest interest: without them the knowledge of his majesty and purity would drive us to despair.

The ground of the controversy between Job and the other disputants appears to be this. They unjustly inferred from his afflictions that he must have been guilty of heinous crimes. They appear not to have duly considered the evil and just desert of the original transgression, and of natural corruption, nor did they take into account the gracious designs of God in purifying his people. Job, in his self-defence, also darkened counsel by words

without knowledge. His views were more distinct than those of his friends; but he did not meet them on the right ground. He does not appear to have alleged his personal righteousness as the ground of his hope towards God. But what he admitted in a general view of his case, he virtually denied while he complained of his sufferings as unmerited and severe; that very complaint proving the necessity for their infliction, in order to his further humiliation in the sight of God.—(1.)

12. By his might he moveth the sea.—*Fry.*

13. What is meant here by the crooked serpent is not certain, some make it the milky way, or a particular constellation.—*Henry.* By this is personified the ecliptic—His hand bent into curves that serpentine track which we behold the sun pursuing through the signs of the zodiac.—*Good.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1—6. *Job protests his sincerity.*

Job's friends suffered him to speak without interruption, and he proceeded in a grave and instructive manner, as in this and the following chapters. He protested solemnly that he had spoken, and would speak the truth. We, by our impatience, vex our own souls, and then complain of God that he has vexed them. Yet see Job's confidence in the goodness both of his cause and of his God; that, though God seemed to be angry with him, and to act against him, yet he cheerfully committed his cause to him. But Job had not due reverence when he spake of God as taking away his judgment, and vexing his soul. For this Elihu justly rebuked him, ch. 34. 5. He declared that to the last he would not speak falsehood, either in condemning or excusing himself. His heart should not reproach him with bearing false witness against himself.

To resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us, when we give them cause to do so, is to affront God, and to wrong ourselves; for it is a good thing, when a man has sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it, 2 Sam. 24. 10. But to resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us, while we still hold fast our integrity, is to baffle the designs of the evil spirit, who tempts believers to question their adoption, and so to concur with the operations of the good Spirit, who witnesses to their adoption.

Ver. 7—10. *The hypocrite is without hope.*

Job here expresses that he looked upon the condition of a hypocrite and a wicked man, to be certainly the most miserable

condition that any man could be in. What if they gained much through life by their profession, and kept up their presumptuous hope till death—would that avail when God required their souls? Would he hear their cries, in that season of anguish and trouble, who had been dissemblers all their lives? In public, to be seen of men, they perhaps had made long prayers, but not in secret. Their best was but a momentary devotion. The miserable condition of wicked people, and especially hypocrites, should engage us to be upright, (for we are for ever undone, if we be not,) and also to get the comfortable evidence of our uprightness; for how can we be easy, if the great concern be uncertain?

Hypocrites do not persevere in religion, because they have no pleasure in it. They that do not delight themselves in the Almighty, will not always call upon him. The more comfort we find in our religion, the more closely we shall cleave to it. Those who have no delight in God, are easily drawn away from religion by the pleasures of sense; they are easily run down by the crosses of this life, and so driven away from their religion, and will not always call upon God.

Ver. 11—23. *The miserable end of the wicked.*

The main difference between this passage and the discourses of Job's friends on the same subject was, that they spoke of the misery of wicked men before death as proportioned to their crimes; Job considered that it might be so; but if it were not, still the consequences of their death assuredly would be dreadful.

Job's friends had seen misery and destruction attend wicked people, especially oppressors; and Job had said much of their prosperity; but now he was willing to see where the difference between his opinion and theirs lay. He agreed with them, that wicked people are miserable, that God will surely reckon with cruel oppressors one time or other, one way or other. This truth is abundantly confirmed by the concurrence even of these angry disputants. But in this they differed. They held that these deserved judgments are presently and visibly brought upon wicked oppressors. Job held that, in many cases, judgments are deferred for some time. That vengeance strikes slowly, he had already showed, ch. 21 and 24; now he comes to show that it strikes surely and severely.

Job here undertakes to set this matter

in a true light. Observe, 1. What he would teach them; that is, the counsels and purposes of God concerning wicked people, and the usual methods of his providence concerning them. 2. How he would teach them; by the hand of God, that is, by his strength and assistance. Those who undertake to teach others, must look to the hand of God to direct them. Those whom God teaches with a strong hand, are best able to teach others, Isa. 8. 11. 3. What reason they had to learn those things which he was about to teach them! Truth, rightly understood and applied, would cure us of that vanity of mind which arises from our mistakes.

That which he particularly offers to lay before them, is, the portion of wicked men with God. Their portion in the world may be wealth and preferment, but their portion with God is ruin and misery. They may, in some instances, prosper, but ruin follows in those very instances.

They may prosper in their children, but ruin attends them. They may prosper in their estates, but ruin attends them too. God disposes of men's estates as he pleases, and often against their wills. When God enriches good men, they must remember they are but stewards, and must give an account. Destruction attends their persons, though they lived long in health, and at ease. The rich man shall seem to others to be very happy, and very easy; but he shall not have his mind composed, and settled, and gathered in. He lies down, but his abundance will not suffer him to sleep so sweetly as the labouring man, Eccl. 5. 12.

He is miserable in death. When some mortal disease seizes him, what a fright is he in! Terrors take hold on him as waters, as if he were surrounded by the flowing tides. He trembles to think of leaving this world, and much more of removing to another. These terrors put him into a silent and sullen despair; and then the tempest of God's wrath, the tempest of death, may be said to steal him away in the night, when no one takes notice of it. Or into open and clamorous despair; and then he is said to be hurled out of his place, as with a storm, violent and very dreadful. Death, to a godly man, is like a fair gale of wind to convey him to the heavenly country, but, to a wicked man, it is like an east wind, a storm, a tempest, that hurries him away, in confusion and amazement, to destruction.

He is miserable after death. While he lived, he had the benefit of sparing mercy; but now the day of God's patience is over, and he will pour out upon him his wrath. What God casts down upon a man, there is no flying from, nor bearing up under. The damned sinner, seeing the wrath of God break in upon him, would fain flee out of his hand; but he cannot. Those who will not be persuaded now to fly to the arms of Divine grace, which are stretched out to receive them, will not be able to flee from the arms of Divine wrath, which will shortly be stretched out to destroy them. His memory falls under the just indignation of all mankind; they shall rejoice in the judgments of God, by which he is cut off, and be well pleased in his fall, Prov. 11. 10. And what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and thus lose his own soul? And what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1—11. *Concerning worldly wealth—How anxiously it is sought for by men.*

Job maintained that the dispensations of Providence were not regulated by the principles his friends contended for, but by higher wisdom. To confirm this he showed what a great deal of knowledge and wealth men may, by their ingenious and industrious searches, make themselves masters of. But does it therefore follow that men may, by their understanding, comprehend the reasons why some wicked people prosper, and others are punished, why some good people prosper, and others are afflicted? No, the caverns of the earth may be discovered, but not the counsels of Heaven. He also shows what a great deal of care and pains worldly men take to get riches.

Observe, the wealth of this world is hid in the earth. There the silver and the gold lay like a worthless thing, of no more account than common earth; and abundance of it will so lie neglected, till the earth and all the works therein shall be burned up. Iron and copper, less costly, but more serviceable metals, are there found in great abundance, which is a great kindness to man.

The wealth that is hid in the earth cannot be come at, but with great difficulty. What is for necessity, is had with a little labour from the surface of the earth; but what is for ornament, must be dug with a great deal of pains out of the

bowels of it. To be fed is cheap, but to be fine is chargeable.

The all wise Creator hath treasured up the metals in the earth; but man's necessity or avarice prompts him to search for them. There he finds the ores mixed with other substances, and knows how to separate and refine them by fire. The miners put an end to the darkness of the subterranean caverns, and search out the treasures contained therein, with the peril of their lives, and the floods break forth upon them. In pursuit of these treasures men travel underground by roads unknown to the animal creation; by their labour and contrivance they overturn rocks and mountains, seeking out and bringing forth hidden valuable treasures.

See how foolish man adds to his own burden; he is sentenced to eat bread in the sweat of his face. But as if that were not enough, he will get gold and silver at the peril of his life; though the more is gotten, the less valuable it is. In Solomon's time, silver was as stones. But observe what it is that carries men through all this toil and peril. Silver and gold are precious things with them, and they have them in their eye in all these pursuits; and in the prospect of laying hold upon them, they make nothing of all these difficulties. Go to the miners, then, thou sluggard in religion, consider their ways, and be wise. Let their courage, diligence, and constancy in seeking the wealth that perisheth, shame us out of slothfulness and faintheartedness in labouring for the true riches. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! How much easier, and safer! Yet gold is sought for, but grace neglected. Will the hopes of precious things out of the earth—so they call them, though really they are paltry and perishing—be such a spur to industry, and shall not the certain prospect of truly precious things in heaven be much more so?

2. The word brass used in the English version generally denotes copper. Brass is a mixed metal, not dug out of the earth by itself.

4. Some machine worked by the foot to carry off waters from the mine.—*Parkhurst.*

Ver. 12—19. *Wisdom is of inestimable value.*

Job, having spoken of the wealth of the world, which men take so much pains for, here comes to speak of a more valuable jewel, and that is, wisdom and understanding, the knowing and enjoying of God and ourselves.

Two things cannot be found out concerning this wisdom.

1. The price of it, for its worth is infinitely more than all the riches in this world. Men know not the worth of it, its excellency, their need of it, and of what unspeakable advantage it will be to them. Men know not the worth of grace, and therefore will take no pains to get it. None can possibly give a consideration for it, with all the wealth this world can furnish them. This Job enlarges upon, ver. 15. It is a gift of the Holy Ghost, which cannot be bought with money, Acts 8. 20. As it does not come by descent, so it cannot be got by purchase. Spiritual gifts are conferred without money and without price, because no money can be a price for them. Wisdom is a more valuable gift, makes richer and happier, than gold or precious stones. It is better to get wisdom than gold. Gold is for the body and time, wisdom is for the soul and eternity. Let that which is most precious in God's account, be so in ours: see Prov. 3. 14, &c.

2. The place of it is undiscoverable. Job asks this as one that truly desired to find it. While most are asking, Where shall money be found? we all should ask, Where may wisdom be found? not vain philosophy, or carnal policy, but true religion. That is the only true wisdom, which best improves our faculties, and best secures our spiritual and eternal welfare. This we should cry after, and dig for, Prov. 2. 3; 4. Job asks for this as one that utterly despaired of finding it any where but in God; and any way but by Divine revelation. We cannot attain to a right understanding of God and his will, of ourselves and our duty and interest, but by reading God's book, and by the men of God. Such is human nature, that there is no true wisdom to be found but in those who are born again, and through grace partake of the Divine nature. As for others, even the most ingenious and industrious, they can tell us no tidings of this lost wisdom. Ask the miners, and by them the depth will say, It is not in me. Ask the mariners, and by them the sea will say, It is not in me. It can never be got either by trading on the waters, or diving into them. Where there is a vein for the silver, there is no vein for wisdom, none for grace. Men more easily break through difficulties in getting worldly wealth, than in getting

heavenly wisdom; they will take more pains to learn how to live in this world, than how to live for ever in a better world.

15, 16, 17, 19. In these verses gold is mentioned five times, and four of the words differ in the original. 1. Gold in the ore. 2. Gold stamped, or in coin. 3. Wrought gold, pure, highly polished. 4. Solid and compact, probably gold formed into different kinds of plate or vessels.—*Carpenter*.

Ver. 20—28. *Wisdom is the gift of God.*

Job brings this inquiry, at length, to this issue, that there is a two-fold wisdom; one hid in God, which is *secret*, and belongs not to us; the other made known by him, and *revealed* to man, which belongs to us and to our children.

1. The knowledge of God's *secret will*, the will of his providence, God has reserved to himself. This knowledge is hid from us: it is high; we cannot attain unto it. Even those who, in their speculations soar highest, and think themselves, like the fowls of the air, above other people, yet cannot pretend to this knowledge. Let us then be content not to know the future events of providence, until time discover them, Acts 1. 7; and not to know the secret reasons of Providence, until eternity discover them. Though this wisdom be hid from all living, yet there is a world on the other side death and the grave, and there we shall see clearly what we are now in the dark about. When the mystery of God shall be finished, it will be laid open, and we shall know as we are known.

This knowledge is hid in God, as the apostle speaks, Eph. 3. 9; Acts 15. 18. There are good reasons for what he does, though we cannot assign them. One day's events, and one man's affairs, have such reference to, and such dependence upon another's, that He only, to whom all events and all affairs are open, and who sees the whole at one view, is a competent Judge of every part. He can do every thing, and is very exact in all he does. He manageth the whole creation in perfect wisdom, even the winds and the waters. We receive the benefit of the rain, avail ourselves of the winds and tides, and take shelter from the storm. Yet we cannot comprehend all their causes and effects. At the creation, God had the whole plan before him, and declared unto man as much as was good for him to know. He hath accurately prepared the whole of his intended operations to all eternity; but we know no more than he declares unto us, and cannot by searching

find out his purposes, or the rules of his conduct. Some consider that Job speaks of wisdom here as a person; then it is parallel with that of Solomon, concerning the essential Wisdom of the Father, the eternal Word, Prov. 8. Before the earth was, then was I by him, John 1. 1, 2.

2. The knowledge of God's *revealed will* is within our reach, and will do us good. God let man know as much as he was concerned to know in order to his duty and happiness. Let him look upon this as his wisdom, To fear the Lord, and to depart from evil. Let him learn that, and he is learned enough. When God forbade man the tree of knowledge, he allowed him the tree of life, and this is that tree, Prov. 3. 18. We cannot attain true wisdom but by Divine revelation; The Lord giveth wisdom, Prov. 2. 6. Here is the description of true religion, pure religion, and undefiled; it is to fear the Lord, and depart from evil. The fear of the Lord is the spring and summary of all religion. There is a slavish fear of God, springing from hard thoughts of him, Matt. 25. 24, 25. There is a selfish fear of God, springing from dreadful thoughts of him, Acts 9. 5, 6. But there is a filial fear of God, springing from great and high thoughts of him, which is the life and soul of all religion. Wherever this reigns in the heart, it will appear by constant care to depart from evil, Prov. 16. 6.

Where is this wisdom to be found? The treasures of it are hid in Christ, revealed by the word, received by faith, through the operation of the Holy Ghost. It is not intended to feed pride or vanity, or to amuse our curiosity. It instructs and encourages sinners to fear the Lord, and to depart from evil, in the exercise of repentance and faith. Let us then flee from the wrath to come, take refuge in the hope of the gospel, receive the comforts of life thankfully, and bear its burdens cheerfully, without desiring to solve all difficulties about them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 1—6. *Job's former comforts in his family.*

Job here proceeds to contrast his former prosperity with his present abject misery. Job now complained most of a load upon his spirits, through God's withdrawing from him; and therefore he wishes he had now his spirit as much enlarged and encouraged in the service of God, as he

had in the days of his youth. Those that prosper in the days of their youth, know not what black and cloudy days they are yet reserved for.

The months just were pleasant to Job, because he had comfort in his God. This was the spring of his prosperity, and the sweetness of it; that he had the favour of God; and the tokens of that favour. A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world.

Four things were then very pleasant to holy Job. 1. The confidence he had in the Divine protection. Those only whom God protects are safe, and may be secure; and therefore those who have ever so much of this world, must not think themselves safe, unless God preserve them. 2. The complacency he had in the Divine favour. The best communications of the Divine favour to the saints in this world are but candle-light, compared with what is reserved for them in the future state. But by the light of that, he walked through darkness; that guided him in doubts, comforted him in griefs, bare him up under burdens, and helped him through all his difficulties. Those that are interested in the favour of God, and know how to value it, can, by the light of that, walk cheerfully and comfortably through all the darkness of this vale of tears. That puts gladness into the heart, enough to balance all the grievances of this present time. 3. The communion he had with the Divine word. He knew God's mind, and was not in the dark about it, as, of late, he had been. God communicates his favour and grace to his people, and receives the returns of their devotion in a way secret to the world. 4. The assurance he had of the Divine presence. Now, he thought God was departed from him, but in those days he was with him, and that was all in all to him. God's presence with a man in his house, though if be but a cottage, makes it a castle and a palace.

Then also he had comfort in his family. It is a comfort to tender parents, to see their children about them; Job speaks very feelingly of this comfort, now that he was deprived of it. He thought it an instance of God's being with him, that his children were about him; and yet we reckon wrong, if, when we have lost our children, we cannot comfort ourselves with this, that we have not lost our God. He had plenty for the support of this numerous family. He thus reckons his wealth,

not what was for hoarding, but what was for use. What is an estate good for, unless we take the good of it ourselves, and do good with it to others?

Riches and flourishing families, like a candle, may be soon extinguished. But when the mind is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, when a man walks in the light of God's countenance, and enjoys secret communion with him, every outward comfort is doubled, every trouble is diminished, and he may pass cheerfully by this light through life and through death; yet the sensible comfort of this state is often withdrawn for a season from those who have enjoyed it. Commonly this arises from sinful negligence, and grieving the Holy Spirit; sometimes it may be a trial, to evidence a man's faith and grace. But it is needful to examine ourselves, to inquire the cause of such a change by fervent prayer, and to increase our watchfulness.

6. These figurative expressions refer to Job's former wealth in cattle, and the manner in which the rocks in those countries are planted with olives.

Ver. 7—17. *The honour paid to Job—His usefulness.*

Job next spoke of the honour that had been rendered to him. Though he had comfort in his own house, yet he did not confine himself to that. Judgment was then administered in the gate, in the street, in the places of concourse, to which every man might have free access.

Job being a prince, a judge, a man in authority, among the children of the east, we are here told what respect was paid him by all sorts of people, not only for the dignity of his place, but for his personal merit, his eminent prudence, integrity, and good management. Virtue and piety challenge respect from all, and usually have it. Modesty becomes those that are young, and in subjection. Honour and fear are due to magistrates, and must be rendered to them, Rom. 13. 7. But if a great and good man was thus revered, how is the great and good God to be feared! All agreed to refer matters in dispute to Job, and to abide by his judgment. Happy the men that are blessed with such eminent gifts as these! they have great opportunities of honouring God, and doing good, but have great need to watch against pride. Happy the people that are blessed with such eminent men! it is a token for good to them.

He was very serviceable to his country with the power he had; and here we see what Job valued himself by in the day of his prosperity. It was by his usefulness. Goodness is God's glory, and it will be ours. He valued himself by the interest he had in the esteem, affections, and prayers of good people. Let great men, and men of estates, thus do good, and they shall have praise. Let those who have good done them, look upon it as a just debt they owe to their protectors and benefactors, to bless them and give witness to them; to use their interest on earth for their honour, and in heaven for their comfort, to praise them, and pray for them. Those are ungrateful indeed who grudge these returns. He also valued himself by the care he took of those that were least able to help themselves. Job gave seasonable relief. Those we best help, whom we help in that wherein they are defective and most need help.

He valued himself by the conscience he made of justice and equity in all his proceedings. His friends had unjustly censured him as an oppressor.

The righteousness of his living Redeemer he had put on by faith, and it was his clothing in the sight of God, in which he was presented before Him unblamable and irreprouvable in his sight; but he here means righteousness in the administration of his office as a magistrate, which he exercised constantly. Graces and virtues in the performance of our duties are a clothing to appear in before men, and should be shown forth with meekness and wisdom, Col. 3. 12, 13.—(27.)

He diligently inquired into matters of fact, patiently and impartially heard both sides, set every thing in its true light, that he might find out the truth, and the merits of every cause. He never answered a matter before he heard it. He valued himself by the check he gave to the violence of proud and evil men; he took away their power of doing mischief. Good magistrates must thus be a terror and restraint to evil doers, and a protection to the innocent; and, in order to this, they have need to arm themselves with zeal and resolution.

Such men are public blessings, and have the honour to resemble Him who rescues poor sinners from Satan, and breaks the jaws of that devourer. How many who were ready to perish, now are

blessing him! How many mourners He hath comforted! But who can show forth His praises? May we trust in his mercy, and seek to imitate his truth, justice, and love.

7. The slavish homage of prostration to princes and great men, which has prevailed generally in the east, was unknown in Arabia at that time. Though Job was one of the greatest men of all the east, no such marks of respect were paid to him.—T. H. Horne.

Ver. 18—25. *His prospect of continued prosperity.*

Being thus honoured, useful, and conscientious, and considering all as coming from the favour of God, Job had hoped to live long in prosperity, and to die in peace and honour in a good old age. He seemed like a tree that had struck a deep root in a well-watered soil, and was refreshed by the dew. If such an expectation arise from lively faith in the providence and promise of God, it is well; but if from conceit of our own wisdom, and the stability of earthly things, it is ill-grounded, and turns to sin. We hope Job's confidence was like David's, Ps. 27. 1, Whom shall I fear? not like the rich fool's, Luke 12. 19, Soul, take thine ease.

See what was the ground of these thoughts. Providence favoured him, and made all his enjoyments comfortable, and all his enterprises successful. Let none think to support their prosperity with what they draw from this earth, without that blessing which is derived from above. God's favour being continued to Job, his glory was still fresh in him. It is only by constant goodness that men's glory is preserved fresh. His bow also was renewed in his hand; that is, his power to protect himself still increased. He had no reason to dread the power of his enemies, neither had he any reason to distrust the fidelity of his friends. All about him were well pleased with every thing he said and did, as David's people were with him, 2 Sam. 3. 36. He had the hearts and affections of all. Happy were they thought on whom he smiled, and they thought themselves so; yet it did not diminish the veneration they had for him. So wisely did he dispense his favours.

He was the sovereign of his country, Every one that has the spirit of wisdom, has not the spirit of government; but Job had both. Yet he had the tenderness of a comforter. He was as ready to succour those in distress, as if it had been his office to comfort the mourners. This he

reflected upon with pleasure, when he was himself a mourner.

Our Lord Jesus is such a King as Job was; the poor man's King, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and upon whom the blessing of a world ready to perish comes: see Ps. 72. 2, &c. To him, therefore, let us give ear, and let him sit chief in our hearts. Let us look to Him as our Captain and King. He hath chosen out our way, and hath been chief in sorrows, as in honours. As he comforteth his mourning followers, so he hath led the whole army of his saints to victory and glory, through tribulations, sufferings, and death—his favour is more refreshing than the latter rain.

CHAPTER XXX.

Ver. 1—14. *Job complains that his honour is turned into contempt.*

Here Job contrasted his present condition with his former honour and authority. Even the children of the most abject, whom he would have disdained to have employed in the meanest services, insulted him. The outcasts of society behaved with insolence towards him. A few may appear to prosper by iniquity, but multitudes are, by their vices, reduced to the most extreme misery. For the peace of society they must be confined or driven away. There are numbers who cannot by any human wisdom be preserved from present and future ruin. They train up their children to vice, so that it is most needful to devise how the rising generation may be kept from being corrupted.

These expressed the greatest scorn and indignation against Job. They did all they could to add to his miseries, and to make them more grievous to him. Now in all this we may see the uncertainty of worldly honour, and popular applause. What little cause men have to be ambitious or proud of that which may be so easily lost, and what little confidence is to be put in it! They that to-day cry, Hosanna, may to-morrow cry, Crucify him. It has often been the lot of very wise and good men, to be trampled upon and abused. And those who look only at the things which are seen, despise those whom the world frowns upon, though the favourites of God. We may see in Job a type of Christ, who was thus made a reproach of men, and despised of the people, Ps. 22. 6; Isa. 53. 3, and who hid not his face from shame and spitting.

We should not regret if we are despised, reviled, and hated by wicked men. We should look unto Jesus who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. Considering who He was, and what we are, and how much inferior our sufferings are to what he endured, we may well be ashamed to complain of the insults and injuries we experience.

Ver. 15—31. *Job was now become a terror and burden to himself.*

In this part of Job's complaint we may observe a great deal that he complains of, and some little that he comforts himself with. It was a day of great affliction and sorrow. The terror and trouble that seized his soul were the sorest part of his calamity. He complained of the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him, ch. 6. 4. And still, which way soever he looked, they turned upon him; which way soever he fled, they pursued him. His bodily diseases were very grievous. By reason of his pain, he could take no rest, but sleep departed from his eyes. He was, as it were, the sport of winds; driven from one misery to another; his whole body melting with heat and weakness, as if by the fire of God's wrath.

That which afflicted him most was, that God seemed to be his enemy. But if our most fervent prayers bring not in speedy and sensible returns, we must not think it strange. Though the seed of Jacob never did seek in vain, they have often thought that they did, and that God has not only been deaf, but angry at the prayers of his people, Ps. 80. 4. We have here one of the worst words that ever Job spake, ver. 21, Thou art become cruel to me. Far be it from the God of mercy and grace, that he should be cruel to any, his compassions fail not—but especially that he should be so to his own children. Harboured hard thoughts of God was the sin which did, at this time, most easily beset Job.

When inward temptations unite with outward calamities, the soul loses its firmness, is hurried as in a tempest, and is filled with confusion. It then becomes difficult to complain without charging God foolishly, as if he dealt too severely with us. But woe be to those who really have him for an enemy! Compared with the perdition of ungodly men, what are all outward or even inward temporal afflictions? Man's substance, take him in

his best estate, is nothing before the power of God; it is soon dissolved.

Job expected that God, by these troubles, would shortly make an end of him. I know that thou wilt bring me to death, the house appointed for all living. The grave is a house, a narrow, dark, cold, ill-furnished house, but it will be our residence; it is our long home, it is our mother's lap, and in it we are gathered to our fathers. It is a house appointed for us, by Him that has appointed us the bounds of all our habitations. It is appointed for all living. There rich and poor meet; we must all be brought thither shortly. It is God that brings us, for the keys of death and the grave are in his hand, and we all know that, sooner or later, he will bring us thither; it would be well if we duly considered it.

Two things aggravated his trouble. 1. That it was a very great disappointment to his expectation. Such uncertain things are all our worldly enjoyments, and such a folly is it to feed ourselves with great expectations from them. They that wait for light from the sparks of their creature-comforts, will be wretchedly disappointed, and make their bed in the darkness. 2. It was a very great change in his condition. His joyful praises, which he used to accompany with the harp or timbrel, were turned into doleful lamentations.

There is something with which he comforts himself, yet it is but a little. He foresees, with comfort, that death will be the period of all his calamities, ver. 24. The hand of God's wrath would bring him to death; but his soul would be safe and happy in the world of spirits, his body safe and easy in the dust. Though in hell, which is called destruction, they cry, yet not in the grave; and being delivered from the second death, the first death will be an effectual relief. Therefore he wished he might be hid in the grave, ch. 14. 13. He reflects with comfort upon the concern he always had for the calamities of others, when he was himself at ease, ver. 25. He herein complains of God, thinking it hard, that he who had showed mercy to others, should not himself find mercy—or rather, we may take it as a quieting consideration to himself; his conscience witnessed that he had always sympathized with persons in misery, and had done what he could to help them, and therefore had reason to expect that, at length, both God

and his friends would pity him. As they who have been unmerciful and hard-hearted to others, may expect to hear of it from their own consciences, when they are themselves in trouble, so they who consider the poor and succour them, shall have the remembrance to make their bed easy in their sickness; Ps. 41. 1, 3. If none are disposed to pity us, yet our God, who corrects, pities us, even as a father pitieth his own children. And as the grave will soon end our earthly joys and sorrows, let us look more to the things of eternity. Then the believer will cease his mourning, and joyfully celebrate the praises of redeeming love.

29. The word here translated owl, is one of the Hebrew names for the ostrich, which is derived from the doleful and hideous noise made by that bird. Job probably refers to the harsh and unpleasant speeches of his friends.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1-8. *Job solemnly protests his integrity.*

Job did not speak the things recorded in this chapter by way of boasting. He did not mention his conscientious conduct as righteousness before God, but to refute the charge of hypocrisy. He mentioned various particulars to do away suspicion, and show that he acted upon principle in all his conduct. He understood the spiritual nature of God's commandments, as reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, in the very same sense in which Christ expounded the law in his sermon on the mount. In general it is best to let our actions speak for us, but in some cases we owe to ourselves and to the cause of God, solemnly to protest our innocence as to crimes of which we are falsely accused.

The lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world, are two fatal rocks on which multitudes split; against these Job protests he was always careful to stand upon his guard. Job was now in pain and sickness, and under that affliction it is in particular comfortable, if our consciences can witness that we have been careful strictly to preserve our bodies in chastity and purity.

He says, I made a covenant with mine eyes, that is, I watched against the occasions of the sin. By that means, through the grace of God, I kept myself from the very first step towards it. Those that would keep their hearts pure, must guard their eyes, Isa. 3. 16; 2 Pet. 2. 14. The first sin began in the eye, Gen. 3. 6.

What we must not meddle with, we must not lust after; and what we must not lust after, we must not look at, Prov. 23. 5, 31; Matt. 5. 28. He would not so much as allow a wanton thought. Shame and sense of honour might restrain him from soliciting to evil, but only grace and the fear of God would restrain him from thinking of it. Those are not chaste, that are not so in spirit as well as body, 1 Cor. 7. 34.

The reasons were, not for fear of reproach among men, though that is to be considered, Prov. 6. 33, but for fear of the wrath and curse of God. Those that wallow in uncleanness, render themselves utterly unfit for communion with God, either in grace here or in glory hereafter, and become allied to unclean spirits, which are for ever separated from him; then what portion, what inheritance, can they have with God? No unclean thing can enter the New Jerusalem, that holy city.

It is a sin that incurs Divine vengeance. It will certainly be the sinner's ruin, if it be not repented of in time. Fools make a mock at this sin, make a jest of it; but they deceive themselves with vain words, for, because of these things, how light soever they make of them, the wrath of God, the insupportable wrath of the eternal God, comes upon the children of disobedience, Eph. 5. 6. This is the sinfulness of the sin, that it alienates the mind from God, Eph. 4. 18, 19, and this is the punishment of the sinners, that they shall be eternally set at a distance from him, Rev. 22. 15.

It cannot be hid from the all-seeing God. A thought cannot be so close, nor a look so quick, as to escape his cognizance, much less can any act be so secretly done as to be out of his sight. If Job was at any time tempted to this sin, he restrained himself from it, and all approaches to it, with this thought, Doth not He see my ways? as Joseph, Gen. 39. 9, How can I do it, and sin against God? God not only sees our ways in general, but takes cognizance of our particular steps, every action, every motion. God takes a more exact notice of us than we do of ourselves; let us therefore walk circumspectly.

Job also stood upon his guard against the love of the world, and carefully avoided all sinful indirect means of getting wealth. He dreaded all forbidden profit as much as all forbidden pleasure. His protestation is, that he had been

honest and just in all his dealings, and never, to his knowledge, did any body any wrong. He never walked with vanity, that is, he never durst tell a lie, to get a good bargain. It was never his way to banter or equivocate, or make many words, in his dealings. Some men's constant walk is a constant cheat. They either make what they have more than it is, that they may be trusted; or less than it is, that nothing may be expected from them. But Job was a different man. His wealth was not gotten by vanity, though now diminished, Prov. 13. 11. He never hastened to deceit. Job never made haste to be rich by deceit, but always acted cautiously, lest, through inconsideration, he should do an unjust thing. What we have in the world may be used with comfort, or lost with comfort, if honestly got.

Injustice is a blot, a blot to the estate, a blot to the owner; it spoils the beauty of both, and therefore is to be dreaded. Those that deal much in the world may perhaps have a blot come upon their hands, but they must wash it off again by repentance and restitution, and not let it cleave to their hands: see Isa. 33. 15. He ratifies his protestation. Let me be weighed in an even balance. An honest man is so far from dreading a trial, that he desires it rather, being well assured that God knows his integrity, and will approve it, and that the trial of it will be to his praise and honour. Without strict honesty and faithfulness in all our dealings, we can have no good evidence of true godliness. Yet how many professors would be unable to abide this touchstone! Alas! most men haste to deceive; they covet riches; their hearts walk after their eyes, and they turn aside.

Ver. 9—15. *Job continues to protest his integrity.*

See here how clear he was from the sin of adultery. See the original of all the defilements of the life; they come from a deceived heart. Every sin is deceitful, none more so than the sin of uncleanness.

See what a dread he had of this sin, concerning the malignity of it. That it was one of the vilest sins a man can be guilty of, highly provoking to God, and destructive to the prosperity of the soul. With respect to the mischievousness of it, and the punishment it deserved, God often punishes the sins of one with the sins of another. Those who are not just and faithful to their relations, must not

think it strange if their relations be unjust and unfaithful to them. It is an evil work, to which the sword of justice ought to be a terror. It is a fire in the soul: they that indulge it, are said to burn. It consumes all that is good there, both convictions and comforts, and lays the conscience waste. It kindles the fire of God's wrath, which, if not extinguished by the blood of Christ, will burn to the lowest hell. It will consume even to that eternal destruction. It consumes the body, Prov. 5. 11, it consumes the substance, it roots out all the increase. Burning lusts bring burning judgments.

Job had a numerous household, and he managed it well. By this he evidenced his sincerity, that he had grace to govern his passion as well as his appetite; and he that in these two things has the rule of his own spirit, is better than the mighty, Prov. 16. 32. Here observe, he did not despise the cause of his servants. If they had offended him, or were accused to him, he would patiently hear what they had to say for themselves, and redress their grievances as far as it appeared they had right on their side, even when they contended with him, Col. 4. 1; Eph. 6. 9. He had herein an eye to God, both as his Judge and their Maker. He considered that he had a Master in heaven, to whom he was accountable; and as we are undone if God should be strict and severe with us, we ought to be mild and gentle towards all with whom we have to do.

When he was tempted to be harsh, this thought came seasonably into his mind: He partakes of the same nature that I do, and is the work of the same hand. Have we not all one Father? Whatever difference there is among men in their outward condition, in their capacity of mind, or strength of body, or place in the world, He that made the one, made the other also; which is a good reason why we should not mock at men's natural infirmities, nor trample upon those that are our inferiors, but in every thing do as we would be done by.

Ver. 16—23. *Job not unmerciful.*

See here the testimony which Job's conscience gave concerning his constant behaviour toward the poor. He is most large upon this head, because in this matter he was most particularly accused. He solemnly protests that he had never been wanting to do good to them, as there

was occasion to the utmost of his ability. He was very tender of them, and had a fatherly concern for them. Those that need not our alms, may yet have occasion for our counsel, and it may be a real kindness to them. If Job knew of any that were in this distress, he was forward to relieve them. Job's sheep were burned with fire from heaven, but this was his comfort, that, when he had them, he came honestly by them, and used them charitably, fed the poor with their flesh, and clothed them with their wool.

He had never been accessory to the wronging of any that were poor. He was tender of all, and injurious to none. Those that have it in their power to do a wrong thing, and to go through with it, and a prospect of getting by it, and yet do justly, and love mercy, and are firm to both, may afterward reflect upon it with much comfort, as Job does here.

Observe the imprecation wherewith he confirms this protestation. He intimates, that it is a righteous thing with God to break the arm that is lifted up against the fatherless. Notice the principles by which Job was restrained from all uncharitableness and unmercifulness. He durst not abuse the poor; for though he could overpower them, yet he could not make his part good against that God who will not let oppressors go unpunished. He stood in awe of the majesty of God, as a God above him—of the wrath of God, as a God that would certainly be against him, if he should wrong the poor. Good men, even the best, have need to restrain themselves from sin with solemn thoughts of the fear of destruction from God. This should especially restrain us from all acts of injustice and oppression—that God himself is the avenger thereof. Even when salvation from God is a comfort to us, yet destruction from God should be a terror to us. Adam, in innocency, was awed with a threatening. Regard to worldly interests may indeed restrain a man from actual crimes; but the grace of God alone can make him habitually hate, dread, and shun sinful imaginations and desires.

The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath in all ages taught men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Repentance and faith will produce hatred of sin, and love to God and man; and our interest in the redeeming

love of God, will be evidenced by a course of conscientious obedience.

Ver. 24—32. *Job not guilty of covetousness and idolatry.*

Four articles more of Job's protestation we have in these verses; which, as all the rest, not only assure us what he was and did, but teach what we should be and do.

1. He protests that he never set his heart upon the wealth of this world, nor took the things of it for his portion and happiness. Our wealth is either advantageous or pernicious to us, according as we stand affected to it. If we make it our rest and our ruler, it will be our ruin; if we make it our servant and an instrument of righteousness, it will be a blessing to us. Job did not make gold his hope. They are very unwise that do, and enemies to themselves who depend upon it as sufficient to make them happy. It is hard to have riches, and not to trust in riches; and that is it which makes it so difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, Matt. 19, 23; Mark 10, 24. He took no pride in his wealth, as if it added anything to his real excellency. He took no pleasure in it, in comparison with the spiritual things which were the delight of his soul. His joy did not terminate in the gift, but passed through it to the Giver. How few prosperous professors can properly appeal to a heart-searching God, that they have not rejoiced *because* their gains were great! Through the determination to be rich, numbers fall into temptations which ruin their souls, or pierce them through with many sorrows.

2. He protests that he never was guilty of idolatry. We do not find that Job's friends charged him with this. Idolatry is one of the old ways which wicked men have trodden; and the most ancient idolatry was, the worshipping of the sun and moon. But, as yet, it was practised secretly, and durst not appear in open view, as, afterward, the most abominable idolatries did. Observe, Job kept his eye, his heart, and his lips, clean from this sin. He kept his heart with all diligence, that he should not be secretly enticed to think that there is a Divine glory in their brightness, or a Divine power in their influence, and that therefore Divine honours are to be paid to them. Here is the source of idolatry; it begins in the heart. Job did not perform the least and lowest act of adoration to these pretended deities. He looked upon this sin as an iniquity to be

punished by the judge. Idolatry debauches men's minds, corrupts their manners, takes off the true sense of religion which is the great bond of societies, and provokes God to send judgments upon a nation. Idolatry is, in effect, atheism; the Gentiles are said to be without God in the world.

3. He protests that so far from doing or designing mischief to any, he neither desired nor delighted in the hurt of the worst enemy he had. The forgiving of those that do us evil, was Old Testament duty. Job was far from revenge. Many who would not wilfully hurt those that stand in their light, or have done them unkindness, yet are secretly pleased, when hurt is done them: but Job was not of that spirit. He did not so much as wish in his own mind that evil might befall them. If others bear malice to us, that will not justify us in bearing malice to them. He was urged to revenge, and yet kept himself clear from it. See how much beloved Job was by his family, how heartily they espoused his cause, but see what a strict hand Job kept upon his passions, that he would not avenge himself. A good man commonly does not himself lay to heart the affronts that are done him, so much as his friends do for him.

4. He protests that he had never been unkind or inhospitable to strangers. Hospitality is a christian duty, 1 Pet. 4, 9. Job, in his prosperity, was noted for it; he opened his door to those who passed by, and invited them in, as Abraham, Gen. 18, 1, 2.

27. To lift up the hand to the mouth and kiss it, and then stretching it out as it were to throw a kiss to the idol, was an act of worship. To kiss and to worship are often used as synonymous terms in scripture, 1 Kings 19, 18; Ps. 2, 12. The kissing the hand to an object is plainly considered as a sign of religious adoration. The earliest apostasy of mankind from the worship of the invisible God is known to have been worshipping the luminaries of the heavens; it is justly considered a proof of the high antiquity of the book of Job, that he here mentions no other sort of idolatry, though his subject leads him to specify such if they were known.—Fry.

Ver. 33—40. *Job not guilty of hypocrisy and violence.*

Here Job clears himself from the charge of dissimulation and hypocrisy, which was the general crime his friends accused him of. It is natural to us to cover our sins; we have it from our first parents; we are loth to confess our faults, willing to excuse them, to make the best of ourselves, and devolve the blame upon others. But

he that thus covers his sins, shall not prosper, Prov. 28. 13.

His courage in that which is good, he produces as an evidence of his sincerity in it. All that knew Job, knew him to be a man of undaunted resolution in a good cause, that boldly appeared, spake, and acted, in defence of religion and justice. The case may be such that it may be our sin to be silent and retired, as when we are called to reprove sin, and bear our testimony against it, to vindicate the truths and ways of God, to do right to those who are injured or oppressed, or any way to serve the public, or do honour to our religion. He was not deterred by numbers or rank from doing justice to the injured, nor ever suffered a righteous cause to be run down by a high hand.

Here observe what his protestation is—That the estate he had, he both got, and used honestly. The whole creation is said to groan under the sin of man; but that which is unjustly gained and held, cries out, and demands justice against him for the injury. He confirms his protestation, as often before, with a suitable imprecation; If I have got my estate unjustly, let thistles grow instead of wheat; the worst of weeds instead of the best of grains. When men get estates unjustly, they are justly deprived of the comfort of them, and disappointed in their expectations from them; it was sown wheat, but shall come up thistles. What men do not come honestly by, will never do them any good.

Job renewed his appeal to God, desiring that he would hear and decide his cause. He challenged his adversaries to produce a written accusation against him. He was confident it would prove no burden, but an honour to him. He would appear with the confidence of a prince who came to be crowned, not as a criminal who came to be condemned.

He will declare unto them the number of his steps. He will let them into the history of his own life, he will give them a narrative of his conversation, what would make against him as well as what would make for him; and let them make what use they pleased of it. Thus the testimony of his conscience was his rejoicing. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

The words of Job are ended! They end with a bold and unequivocal assertion, that, with respect to any accusation which

could be brought against his moral and religious character, as the cause suggested to be the reason for the calamities which had been brought upon him, he could appeal to God himself, and should be delighted could there be such an appeal. Without hesitation, as a man who feared nothing that could be brought forth against him, he would enter into the presence of his Judge. But, however confident Job was, we shall see he was mistaken, ch. 40. 4, 5; 1 John 1. 8.—(25.)

Let us all judge ourselves, and not cover our sins as Adam; wherein we are guilty let us seek forgiveness; and may the Lord have mercy upon us, and write his laws in our hearts.

How great is the relief to every mind conscious of the manifold offences there dwelling, and seen, perhaps, to no eye but to His that seeth in secret, from that blessed scripture which saith, If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us seek justification before God in that blood which cleanseth from all sin. Though Job evidently was taught concerning these means, and had strong faith in his Redeemer, yet, had he lived to read and know, as we do now, of the complete redemption wrought by him, how would his soul have rejoiced in the consolation! Let the righteousness of Christ, as our glorious Mediator and Surety, be the everlasting comfort, confidence, and joy of our hearts; then shall we be enabled to stand against all the accusations of Satan, of false friends and open foes, and exclaim with the apostle, "It is God that justifieth, and who is he that condemneth?"—(37.)

35. "O that mine adversary had written a book—That my friends, who charge me with hypocrisy, would draw up their charge in writing, that it might be reduced to a certainty, and that we might the better try concerning it."—Henry.

40. Thistles, probably the black thorn. Cockle, rendered wild grapes, Is. 5. 2, 4, probably the night-shade, or the acornite.—Greenfield.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 1—5. *Elihu—his parentage—he is displeased at the dispute between Job and his friends.*

Job's friends were silenced, but not convinced. They retained their ill opinion of him, and professed to give over because he was righteous in his own eyes, and determined at any rate to vindicate himself. Others besides the disputants had been present, and Elihu among the rest. He

was justly displeased both with Job and his friends. Job was more anxious to clear his own character than the justice add goodness of God; and he had spoken many irreverent things concerning God's conduct to him. Elihu was displeased with Job's friends because he thought they had not been so candid to Job as they ought to have been; they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. They judged him to be a hypocrite, a wicked man, and would not recede from that opinion, yet they could not prove him so. Seldom is a quarrel begun, and more seldom is a quarrel carried on, in which there is not a fault on both sides. Elihu, as became him, took part with neither. Those that seek for truth, must be impartial in their judgments concerning the contenders, and not reject what is true and good on either side, nor approve or defend what is amiss.

Ver. 6—14. *Elihu reproves Job and his friends.*

Elihu, if we are careful to mark his language, professes to speak by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He corrects both parties, and the Almighty, when he condescends to speak from the stormy cloud, ch. 38, corroborates his words.—(25.)

As Elihu was younger than the others, he had waited till the controversy was dropped, before he attempted to declare his opinion. Elihu appears a man of great modesty and humility. He was observant of all that passed, but hesitated to deliver himself upon it, because he differed in his sentiments from those that were elder than he. It becomes us to be suspicious of our own judgment in matters of doubtful disputation, to be swift to hear the sentiments of others, and slow to speak our own, especially when contrary to the judgment of those whom we justly have a veneration for. He allowed it to be a good general rule that they who had the longest experience should speak first, and teach wisdom to the young. But there is a rational soul in every man. God giveth wisdom both natural and spiritual as he pleaseth; therefore the greatest and most aged are not always the wisest; this encouraged him at length to state his opinion. By attention to the word of God and dependence upon the Holy Spirit, young men may become wiser than the aged; but this wisdom will render them swift to hear, slow to speak, and disposed to give others a patient hearing.

"There is a spirit in man;" the sense

is, God is pleased to give his Spirit unto mankind, unto men of all ages and qualities as he pleaseth; and having given it in some measure unto me, I may take the boldness to utter my thoughts.—(54.)

It was requisite to set this controversy in a true light, which, by all that had hitherto been said, was but rendered more perplexed. I must speak, lest you should say, We have found out wisdom, lest you should think that Job cannot be convinced and humbled by any other argument than yours, that God casteth him down, and not man; that it appears by his extraordinary afflictions that God is his enemy, and therefore he is certainly a wicked man. I must show you that this is an error, and that Job may be convinced without maintaining it. It is time to speak, when we hear errors advanced, especially under pretence of supporting the cause of God. It is time to speak, when God's judgments are vouched to support men's pride and passion, and unjust censures of their brethren. He will not repeat their arguments, nor go upon their principles. A controversy already fully handled, a wise man will let alone, unless he can amend and improve what has been done.

14. Elihu limits his censure to Job's answers in this dispute. He fixes upon some of the most obnoxious passages; such as seemed to betray too high conceit of his own virtue, want of respect of God, and his honourable sentiments of Providence. He takes occasion, from those passages, to vindicate the Divine goodness, equity, and justice.—*Boothroyd.*

Ver. 15—22. *His zeal to speak with impartiality.*

Three things are mentioned as reasons for Elihu's interposing. 1. They not only left off speaking themselves, but they stood still, to hear if any others would speak. The judgment is the Lord's, and by him it must be determined who is in the right, and who is in the wrong; but since you have each of you showed your opinion, I also will show mine. If we are sure that the Spirit of God suggested to us what we are about to say, we ought to refrain till it fairly comes to our turn to speak. God is the source of order, not of confusion. 2. They must give him leave to speak, for he cannot forbear. He pleads that he had a great deal to say; having made remarks upon all that had hitherto been said. The Divine Providence is a subject that can never be exhausted. He was under a necessity of saying it. The spirit within me, not only instructs me what to say, but puts me on to say it. He is full

of matter, and would speak of these things for the good of others. It would be an ease and satisfaction to himself, to deliver his mind. It is great refreshment to a good man, to have liberty to speak for the glory of God, and the edification of others. 3. He was resolved to speak, with all possible freedom and sincerity, what he thought was true, not what he thought would please. A good reason he gives for that resolution. It is good to keep ourselves in awe with a holy fear of God's judgments. He hates all dissimulation and flattery, and will soon put lying lips to silence, and cut off flattering lips, Ps. 12. 3. The more we consider the majesty of God, as our Maker, and the more we dread his wrath and justice, the less danger shall we be in of a sinful fearing, or flattering of men. The true servant of God will regard times and seasons, but he must speak, and speak faithfully, without respect of persons or giving flattering titles, for he is not a man pleaser, but a servant of Jesus Christ; and his desire is to be accepted of him.

Man would not make such evil work in the world, as he does, if he remembered God his Maker, and that he is the work of God. That we are made by the power of God, and that the price by which we are redeemed, being the blood of God, should constrain us at all times, and in all things to be at the command of God. It is profitable sometimes to remember what he is able to do against us, as well as what he is able to do for us; to think of God's displeasure as well as of his love and mercy. We need these meditations of God to keep down our corruptions and lusts. How steadfast are they in the work of the Lord who set him always before them! Could we but set the Lord always before us, either in his mercies or his terrors, we should not be moved from doing our duty in whatever we are called to do.—(15.)

19. Behold my bosom is as wine that hath no vent: as new skin bottles, it is bursting.—*Good.* The Greek version has it, new wine, wine in a state of fermentation.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 1—7. *Elihu offers to reason with Job.*

Elihu had given his reasons for speaking, and here he demanded the attention of Job in particular. He spoke deliberately, and in the plainest manner. He was the creature of God, dependent on him from whose life-giving Spirit he de-

rived his being. Job might therefore make the best of his cause before him. He had desired an impartial judge to be appointed in God's stead to decide his appeal. Behold here was one according to his wish, a man like himself.

Job had urged with God, ch. 10. 9, Remember that thou hast made me as the clay. I, says Elihu, am formed out of the clay, as well as thou; formed of the same clay, so some read it. It is good for us to consider that we are formed out of the clay; and well for us it is, that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, according to Israel's wish, upon a full trial, Deut. 5. 24, 25. He has wisely deposited the treasure in earthen vessels like ourselves, 2 Cor. 4. 7. Job would therefore have no reason to be frightened. I stand upon the same level with thee, and therefore cannot impress that terror upon thee, which thou mayest justly dread from the appearance of the Divine Majesty. If we would rightly convince men, it must be by reason, not by terror; by fair arguing, not by a heavy hand.

6. Or, I am as thou art, with, or towards God.—*Pool.*

Ver. 8—13. *Elihu blames Job for reflecting upon God.*

Elihu charges Job with some expressions, reflecting upon the justice and goodness of God. When we hear anything said that tends to God's dishonour, we ought publicly to bear our testimony against it. What is said amiss in our hearing, we are concerned to reprove.

Job had not represented himself as innocent—he had owned himself to have sinned before God; but he had used expressions on which Elihu might ground this charge. It was true, that Job was perfect and upright, and not such a one as his friends had represented; but he ought not to have insisted, as if God had done him wrong in afflicting him. Job had represented God as severe in marking what he did amiss.

Elihu endeavours to convince him that he had spoken wrong in speaking thus, and that he ought to humble himself before God for it, and by repentance to unsay it. There is enough in this one plain, unquestionable truth, That God is greater than man, if duly improved, for ever to put to silence all our complaints of his providence, and our exceptions against his dealings with us. He is not only more wise and powerful than we are, and

therefore it is to no purpose to contend with him, but more holy, just, and good; these are the glories and excellences of the Divine nature.

God is not accountable to us. It is an unreasonable thing for us, weak, foolish, sinful creatures, to strive with a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. His judgments will certainly justify themselves; if we do not satisfy ourselves in them, it is our own fault. There are secret things which belong not to us, which it is not for us to pry into. Who can discover the secret reasons of God's appointments? No doubt he acts with perfect justice, wisdom, and goodness, where we cannot perceive it.

Ver. 14—18. *God calleth men to repentance.*

God speaks to us by conscience, by providences, and by ministers; of all which Elihu here discourses. There was not then, that we know of, any Divine revelation in writing, that is not here mentioned among the ways by which God speaks to men, though now it is the principal way. In these verses he shows how God teaches and admonishes the children of men by their own consciences. Observe the proper season for these admonitions, ver. 15, when men are retired from the world, and the business and conversation of it. It is a good time for them to retire into their own hearts, and commune with them, when they are upon their beds, solitary and still, 1's. 4. 4. When God sent angels, extraordinary messengers, on his errands, he commonly chose that time for the delivery of them.

See also the power and force with which those admonitions come. When God designs men's good, by the convictions and dictates of their own consciences, he opens the heart, as he opened Lydia's, and opens the ears, so that the conviction finds or forces its way. Nay, he works in the soul submission to conscience, and a compliance with its rules, for that follows upon God's opening the ear, Isa. 50. 5. He makes them to abide, that is, the instruction that is suited to them. This he makes their souls to receive the deep and lasting impression of.

The end and design of these admonitions are to keep men from sin, and particularly the sin of pride. Many a man has been stopped in the career of a sinful pursuit by the reasonable checks of his own conscience. God hides those things from man which are the matter of his

pride, and takes his mind off from dwelling upon them, by setting before him what reason he has to be humble. All those whom God has mercy in store for, he will humble and hide pride from. Pride makes people eager and resolute in the prosecution of their purposes; therefore God withdraws them from their purposes, by mortifying their pride.

While sinners are pursuing their evil purposes, and indulging their pride, their souls are hastening apace to destruction, both in this world and that to come. That which turns men from sin, saves them from hell. What mercy it is to be under the restraints of an awakened conscience!

Ver. 19—28. *God sends afflictions for good.*

Job complained much of his diseases, and judged by them that God was angry with him; his friends did so too: but Elihu shows they were mistaken, for God often afflicts the body in love, and with gracious designs of good to the soul. This part of Elihu's discourse will be of great use for due improvement of sickness, in and by which God speaks to men.

See what frail, what vile bodies we have, which, though receiving no external hurt, may be thus pained from causes within themselves: see what work sin makes, what mischief it does. Pain is the fruit of sin; yet by the grace of God, the pain of the body is often made a means of good to the soul. The soul that is well nourished with the bread of life, sickness will not make lean, but it soon makes a change in the body.

Yet all this often ends in good. As interpreters, to show the way of pardon and peace, are scarce, they are the more to be valued. They show the sinner the justice of God in his sufferings, the way of imputing righteousness to the believer, and how he is to apply for pardon and sanctification. Such a messenger often proved the instrument of conversion and salvation through the ransom which was to be made through the Messiah; and the Lord, in mercy, commanded deliverance from the pit of destruction, from that death which is the wages of sin. When afflictions have done their work, they shall be removed. When we return to God in a way of duty, he will return to us in a way of mercy. A ransom of propitiation is found. Jesus Christ is that ransom, so Elihu calls him, as Job had called him his Redeemer, for he is both the Purchaser and the Price,

the Priest and the Sacrifice. So high was the value of souls, that nothing less would redeem them, and so great the injury done by sin, that nothing less would atone for it, than the blood of the Son of God, who gave his life a ransom for many. This is a ransom of God's finding, a contrivance of infinite wisdom; we could never have found it ourselves; the angels themselves could never have found it. It is the hidden wisdom; and such an invention as is, and will be the everlasting wonder of those principalities and powers that desire to look into it.

See what a blessed change follows. Recovery from sickness is a mercy indeed, when it arises from the remission of sin. That is the method of a blessed recovery, Matt. 9. 2, 6. His soul recovers its peace, and the way of salvation. Then he receives the gift of righteousness, and partakes of sanctification. Through the ransom of the Saviour's blood he comes with joy before the mercy-seat, beholds by faith the countenance of his reconciled Father, and waits for the Saviour's appearing to judge the world, with joyful hope of receiving that crown of righteousness which is laid up for him in heaven. When he finds himself recovering, he shall not think that prayer is no longer necessary; we need the grace of God as much for the sanctifying of a mercy, as for the sanctifying of an affliction.

Every true penitent rejoices more in the returns of God's favour, than in any instance whatsoever of prosperity or pleasure, Ps. 4. 6, 7. He has a blessed tranquillity of mind, arising from the sense of his justification before God, who will render unto this man his righteousness. He shall receive the atonement, that is, the comfort of it, Rom. 5. 11. Righteousness shall be imputed to him, and peace be thereupon spoken; the joy and gladness of which he shall then be made to hear, though he could not hear it in the day of his affliction. God shall give him grace to go and sin no more. As he shall pray unto God, so he shall render to man his righteousness, shall make restitution, and for the future do justly.

The general rule which God will go by in dealing with the children of men is inferred from this instance. All that truly repent of their sins, shall find mercy with God. See here, 1. What sin is, and what reason we have not to sin. Would we know what is to be got by sin? It pro-

fiteth us not. The works of darkness are unfruitful works; all the gains of sin will come far short of the damage. All true penitents are ready to own this; and it is a mortifying consideration, Rom. 6. 21. 2. See what repentance is, and what reason we have to repent. We must, with a broken and contrite heart, confess our sins to God, 1 John 1. 9. We must confess the *fact* of sin, and not deny the charge, or stand upon our own justification. We must confess the *fault* of sin, the iniquity of it; I have perverted that which was right. We must confess the *folly* of sin; So foolish have I been and ignorant, for it profited me not; and therefore what have I to do any more with it? Is there not good reason why we should make such a penitent confession as this? God looks upon sinners with compassion, desiring to bear this from them, for he has no pleasure in their ruin. He encourages them, and is ready to accept them, Ps. 32. 5, 6, as the father went forth to meet the returning prodigal. It will turn to our unspeakable advantage. The promise is general; If any humble themselves thus, whoever they are, they shall be saved from the wrath to come. They shall be happy in everlasting life and joy. To obtain this bliss, if the prophet had bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? How much more, when he only says unto us, Wash, and be clean; Confess, and be pardoned, Repent, and be saved!

23. Christ is a messenger, "the messenger of the covenant of peace," Mal. 3. 1. He is an interpreter, the great interpreter of God's counsels of love to sinners. One among a thousand, even "the chief among ten thousand," Cant. 5. 10.—*Boston.*

Ver. 29—33. *Elihu entreats Job's attention.*

We have here the conclusion of this first part of Elihu's discourse, in which he briefly sums up what he had said, showing that God's great and gracious design, in all the dispensations of his providence toward the children of men, is, to save them from being for ever miserable, and to bring them to be for ever happy. By whatever means we are kept back from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living, we shall bless the Lord for them at last, and should bless him for them now, though painful and distressing. It is better to be chastened of the Lord, than to be condemned with the world. All providences are to be looked upon as God's workings with man, his strivings

with him. He often works such things as these, twice, thrice; it is in the original, returns again to the same method, repeats the same applications. Why does he take all this pains with man? It is to bring back his soul from the pit. If God did not take more care of us than we do of ourselves, we should destroy ourselves; but he devises means, by his grace, to undo that by which we were undoing ourselves. The former method, by dream and vision, was to prevent sin, that we might not fall into it. This, by sickness and the word, is to recover those that have fallen into sin, that they may not lie still and perish in it. Whom God saves from sin and hell, which are darkness, he will bring to heaven, the inheritance of the saints in light; and this he aims at, in all his institutions, and all his dispensations. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus visit him? It will render those that perish for ever inexcusable, that so much was done to save them, and they would not be healed.

Elihu begs Job to mark this well. What is intended for our good, challenges our regard. If he has nothing to say against what is said, Elihu has something more to say, which he desires him patiently to attend to. Those that are wise and good, may yet be wiser and better, and must therefore set themselves to improve by the means of wisdom and grace. But all depends upon Jesus himself speaking by his ministers. He is the only effectual interpreter, ver. 23; by his Spirit he causes the sinner to see the justice of his condemnation.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ver. 1—9. *Elihu accuses Job of charging God with injustice.*

Elihu here calls upon those present to attend and decide with him upon Job's expressions. An appeal may be made to the plainest christian, whose understanding is enlightened, whose heart is sanctified by the Spirit of God, and who is versed in the scriptures, to decide how far matters, sentiments, or actions, accord with true religion. He will decide with more accuracy than any that lean to their own understandings; for he chooses the oracles of God as his standard, and has his senses exercised to discern good and evil.

Job had spoken as if he meant wholly to justify himself. While he complained that God treated him with great severity,

he seemed to charge God with injustice; and in his bitter complainings he spake as if his transgressions had not deserved his sufferings. A spiritual man is pained to hear men intent upon justifying themselves, reflecting on the dealings of God, or supposing that they suffer without remedy, or not having transgressed. He thinks they imitate the evil doers, and is ready to infer that they consider religion as an unprofitable thing.

We have need to pray that God would never leave us to ourselves, to say or do any thing which may make us a reproach to the foolish, Ps. 39. 8. He that says, I have cleansed my hands in vain, does not only offend against the generation of God's children, Ps. 73. 13—15, but gratifies his enemies, and says as they say.

Ver. 10—15. *God cannot be unjust.*

Elihu had showed Job, in the foregoing chapter, that God meant him no hurt in afflicting him, but intended it for his spiritual benefit. In this chapter he shows that God did him no wrong in afflicting him, nor punished him more than he deserved. If the former did not satisfy him, yet this ought to silence him.

The truth here maintained respects the justice and equity of all God's proceedings. By this Elihu meant to try Job's conduct. Now observe in these verses how plainly this truth is laid down. He does wrong to none; God cannot do wickedness, nor the Almighty commit iniquity. It is inconsistent with the perfection of his nature, and so it is also with the purity of his will; God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. He neither can, nor will do a wrong thing, nor deal hardly with any man. Because he is God, and therefore is infinitely perfect and holy, he can neither do wrong himself, nor countenance it in others. If services persevered in, now go unrewarded, and sins persisted in, now go unpunished, yet there is a day coming when God will fully render to every man according to his works.

Further, though the believer's final condemnation be reversed through the Saviour's ransom, yet he hath merited worse than any temporal afflictions; so that no wrong is done him however he be tried. But God cannot be biassed by fear or partiality; all his doings result from his own perfections. It is as impossible that he should deviate from wisdom, justice, and truth, as that he should cease

to be Almighty, or to exist. All pious men know that he readily could destroy both the bodies and souls of men, and justly might do so. While life and hope remain, they cannot allow that a sinner can have cause to murmur, but are convinced he hath much cause to be thankful.

Ver. 16—30. *God's power and overruling providence.*

Elihu here appeals directly to Job himself; if indeed he were, as he was reputed to be, a man of understanding, let him attend. Could he suppose that the Lord resembled those earthly princes who hate right, are unfit to rule, and are the scourges of mankind? How infatuated and impious must he be, to accuse the Lord whose justice is as absolute as his authority, who regards the poor as much as the rich, and with impartiality.

It is daring presumption to arraign and condemn God's proceedings, as Job had done by his discontents. They are all the work of his hands. Their persons are so; the poor are made by the same hand, and of the same mould, as the rich. Their conditions are so; the poor were made poor by the Divine Providence, as well as the rich made rich; and therefore the poor shall fare never the worse for that which is their lot, not their fault.

Elihu suggests divers considerations to Job, to produce in him high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him to submit.

1. God is almighty, and able to deal with the strongest of men, when he enters into judgment with them; even a nation shall be troubled when God pleases. What cannot He do, who has all the powers of death at his command? It is not a work of time, with God, to bring down his proud enemies; nor is he bound to give them an hour's warning; This night thy soul shall be required, Luke 12. 20. If kings stand not before him, how shall we stand?

2. God is omniscient, and can discover that which is most secret. The most subtle cannot escape his eye; and therefore, if some are punished, either more or less than we think they should be, it becomes us to ascribe it to some secret cause known to God only. Observe here, The workers of iniquity would hide themselves, if they could, from the eye of God. They would gladly be hid even in the grave, and lie for ever there, rather than appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. But it is in vain to think of flying from

God's justice, when his wrath is in pursuit of us. The workers of iniquity may find ways and means to hide themselves from men, but not from God.

3. God is righteous in all his proceedings. He will not give any man cause to complain that he deals hardly with him. Therefore Job was very much to be blamed for his complaints of God. It is not for man ever to propose to enter into judgment with the Omnipotent. Job had often wished to plead his cause before God. Elihu asks, To what purpose? All is well that God does, and will be found so. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, they turn back from God; it is because they do not consider his ways, not because they cannot; they will not. From inconsideration comes impiety, and thence all immorality.

4. God has an uncontrollable dominion in all the affairs of the children of men. Observe, The frowns of all the world cannot trouble those whom God quiets with his smiles. When he gives quietness, who can then make trouble? This is a challenge to all the powers of hell and earth, to disquiet those to whom God speaks peace, and for whom he creates it. If God give outward peace to a nation, he can disable the enemies of it from giving it any disturbance. If God only give inward peace to a man, the quietness and the everlasting assurance, which are the effect of righteousness, neither the accusations of Satan, nor the afflictions of this present time, no, nor death itself, can give trouble. What can make those uneasy, whose souls dwell at ease in God? See Phil. 4. 7. The smiles of all the world cannot quiet those whom God troubles with his frowns. Who can behold a displeased God, so as to bear up under his wrath, or turn it away? Nor can any relieve the distresses of the mind against God and his terrors. If he impress the sense of his wrath upon a guilty conscience, all the comforts the creature can administer are ineffectual. The same Providence that governs mighty kingdoms, presides in the concerns of the meanest individual. Neither the strength of a whole nation can resist his power, nor the smallness of a single person evade his cognizance.

5. God provides that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared, ver. 30. See here the pride of hypocrites; they aim to reign; the praise of men,

and power in the world, are their reward, what they aim at. Much mischief has been done to the power of godliness, under the pretence of a form of godliness. If God has mercy in store for a people, he will either prevent the rise, or hasten the ruin of hypocritical rulers.

Ver. 31—37. *Elihu sharply reproves Job.*

In these verses Elihu instructs Job what he should say under his affliction. When we reprove for what is amiss, we must direct to what is good. Job's other friends would have had him own himself a wicked man. Elihu will oblige him only to own that he had spoken unadvisedly with his lips. Let us remember this, in giving reproof, and not make the matter worse than it is. Elihu directs Job,

1. To humble himself before God for his sins, and to accept the punishment of them. Penitents, if sincere, will take all well that God does, and will bear chastisement as intended for good.

2. To pray to God to discover his sins to him. A good man is willing to know the worst of himself, and particularly, under affliction, he desires to be told wherefore God contends with him, and what God designs in correcting him.

3. To promise reformation. This implies a confession that we have offended, with true remorse and godly sorrow for the offence, and a humble compliance with God's design in afflicting us, which is to part between us and our sins. It is not enough to be sorry for our sins, but we must go and sin no more.

Elihu reasons with Job concerning his discontent and uneasiness under affliction. We are ready to think every thing that concerns us, should be just as we would have it; but Elihu here shows that it is unreasonable to expect it; Should it be according to thy mind? Elihu here speaks with great deference to the Divine will and wisdom, and satisfaction therein. It is highly fit that every thing should be according to God's mind. Must we never be afflicted, because we have no mind to it? Is it fit that sinners should feel no smart? Or is it fit that we should choose what rod we will be beaten with? No: every thing should be according to God's mind, and not ours, for he is the Creator, and we are creatures; he is infinitely wise, we are foolish and short-sighted.

Elihu appeals to all intelligent, impartial persons, whether there was not sin

and folly in that which Job said. He would have the matter thoroughly examined. Alas, how often are our tempers and conduct contrary to a reasonable frame!

What he has said tends to strengthen the hands and harden the hearts of wicked people in their wickedness. Far be it from us that we should answer for them, or say any thing in favour of them. He has spoken against God himself. Those that have sinned, and, when they are called to repent, go on frowardly, add rebellion to their sin, and make it exceeding sinful.

Behold the revelation God has given us. One deems it unnecessary, for a second it is too simple, for a third it is too mysterious. See Jesus Christ crucified. God has set his King upon his holy hill of Zion, and has sworn that to him every knee shall bow. But when we begin to think of returning to God, it is not by the way which he has consecrated for us, but by a way of our own devising. We seek to be justified by our own works: while the gospel assures us we must be justified by the faith of Christ. And the same is to be seen as to Providence. Who is content with such things as he has? Man would have every thing according to his own mind—he would have his own mind the measure, both of all he does toward God, and of all God does towards him. Placed in a corner of the universe, where only a small part of God's works is under his view—his eyes dim by reason of weakness, such is man! and this vain man would be wise, who deems himself capable of governing, and wishes to arrange things according to his mind!—(42.)

Elihu's desire that Job might be tried unto the end, means, that as the afflictions he was exercised with had a gracious design in them—as the real friend to Job—he could not but hope that they might be continued till God's glory was fully manifested by the issue of them; and Job himself brought to the conclusion that God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, Ps. 145. 17. The believer saith, Let my God, my Saviour, my wise and loving Lord, choose every thing for me. Sure I am it will be the wisest and best chosen; that which ought to be for his glory and my good.—(37.)

33. This verse has been found very difficult. The sense seems to be, Job should have taken for granted that the all-wise and just God was not chastening him for nothing. If his conscience did not accuse him, he should have asked the

cause of him who knoweth the heart, deceitful as it is. He should have humbly declared his desire to repent of, and to forsake any sin that had been committed. Whatever it may be, the sin he has not noted, the omission or imperfection he does not perceive; the prayer of the afflicted should be, "Search me, O God; see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Such is the right course which Elihu, by the Spirit of inspiration, would point out to Job, and through him to every afflicted child of God. He had used a language in some parts of his speeches that might almost bear the construction of this passage, but it evidently was not spoken in the language of humble contrition which Elihu here recommends.—*Fry.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ver. 1—8. *Elihu shows them man's conduct cannot profit or hurt the Lord, but only his fellow-creatures.*

Two things Elihu reproves Job for:—

1. For justifying himself more than God. When Job insisted upon his own integrity, and the severity of God's dealings with him, he did, in effect, say, My righteousness is more than God's; whereas, though we are ever so good, and our afflictions ever so great, we are chargeable with unrighteousness, and God is not.

2. For disowning the benefits and advantages of religion, because he suffers these things. The psalmist, when he compared his own afflictions with the prosperity of the wicked, was tempted to say, Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, Ps. 73. 13. And if Job said so, he did, in effect, say, My righteousness is more than God's.

In answer to Job and those who were disposed to agree with him, Elihu called his attention to the heavens. The immensity of the works of God may lead us to some feeble apprehensions of His infinite majesty, glory, and happiness. They are far above us, and God is far above them; how much then is he out of the reach either of our sins or of our services!

Men may be either bettered or damaged by what we do; but God can neither be prejudiced, nor advantaged, by what any, even the greatest, do, or can do. He needs not our service. Our religion brings no accession at all to his happiness. He is so far from being beholden to us, that we are beholden to him for making us righteous; and therefore we can demand nothing from him, nor have any reason to complain if we have not what we expect, but to be thankful that we have better than we deserve.

Ver. 9—13. *Why those who cry out under afflictions are not regarded.*

Elihu here answers to another word of Job, which reflected much upon the justice and goodness of God. Job complained that God did not regard the cries of the oppressed against their oppressors. This Job knows not what to make of, nor how to reconcile to the justice of God and his government.

Elihu solves the difficulty: If the cries be not heard, the fault is not in God; he is ready to hear and help, but they ask and have not, because they ask amiss, James 4. 3. They cry out, by reason of the arm of the mighty, but it is a complaining cry, a wailing cry, not a penitential praying cry; the cry of nature and passion, not of grace: see Hos. 7. 14.

They do not inquire after God under their affliction. Afflictions are sent to direct and quicken us to inquire early after God, Ps. 78. 34. But many under great oppressions never take notice of his hand in their troubles; if they did, they would bear their troubles more patiently, and be more benefited by them. Affliction should drive them to God, but how seldom is this the case! It is lamentable to see so little religion among the poor and miserable part of mankind. Every one complains of his troubles; but none saith, Where is God my Maker? that is, None repent of their sins, none return to him that smites them, none seek the face and favour of God, and that comfort in him, which would balance outward afflictions. They are wholly taken up with the wretchedness of their condition; as if that would excuse them in living without God in the world, which should engage them to cleave the more closely to him. It is to be lamented, that he is so little inquired after by the children of men. All are asking, Where is mirth? Where is wealth? Where is a good bargain? But none ask, Where is God my Maker?

They do not take notice of the mercies they enjoy in and under their afflictions, nor are thankful for them, and therefore cannot expect that God should deliver them out of their afflictions. He provides for inward comfort and joy under outward troubles; we ought to make use of that, and wait his time for the removal of our troubles. He gives songs in the night, ver. 10; when our condition is ever so dark and melancholy, there is that in God's providence and promise which is sufficient, not

only to support us, but to enable us to give thanks, and even to rejoice in tribulation. When we only pore upon the afflictions we are under, and neglect the consolations of God which are treasured up for us, it is just with God to reject our prayers. He has endued us with noble powers and faculties. Now this furnishes us with matter for thanksgiving, even under the heaviest burden of affliction. Whatever we are deprived of, we have our immortal souls, those jewels, more worth than all the world, continued to us; even those things that kill the body, cannot hurt them. And if our affliction prevail not to disturb the exercise of their faculties, but we enjoy the use of reason, and peace of conscience, we have much reason to be thankful, how pressing soever our calamities are. If the oppressed only cry by reason of the arm of the mighty, and do not look up to God, they do no more than the brutes, who complain when they are hurt, and they forget that instruction and wisdom by which they are advanced so far above them. God relieves the brute creatures because they cry to him according to the best of their capacity, Ps. 104. 21. ch. 38. 41. But what reason have men to expect relief, who are capable of inquiring after God as their Maker, and yet cry to him no otherwise than as brutes do?

They are proud and unhumiliated under their afflictions, which were sent to mortify them, and to hide pride from them. They exclaim against their oppressors, and fill the ears of all about them with their complaints, not sparing to reflect upon God himself, and his providence. God does not work deliverance for them, and perhaps men do not much regard them; and why so? God hears not such sinners. They have, it may be, brought themselves into trouble by their own wickedness. Yet this is not all; they are proud still, therefore they do not seek unto God, Ps. 10. 4; or if they do cry unto him, therefore he does not give answer, for he hears only the desire of the humble, Ps. 10. 17. If we cry to God for the removal of an affliction, and it is not removed, the reason is, not because the Lord's hand is shortened, or his ear heavy; but because the affliction has not done its work, we are not sufficiently humbled, and therefore must thank ourselves that it is continued.

They are not sincere and upright with God, in their supplications to him, and

therefore he does not hear and answer them. God will not hear the hypocritical prayer coming out of feigned lips. It is vanity to think that God should hear it, who searches the heart, and requires truth in the inward part.

Ver. 14—16. *Elihu reproves Job's impatience.*

Another improper word for which Elihu reproves Job is, Thou sayest thou shalt not see him; that is, thou complainest that thou dost not understand the meaning of his severe dealings with thee, nor discern the design of them. As in prosperity, we are ready to think our mountain will never be brought low; so, when in adversity, we are ready to think our valley will never be filled up; but to conclude that tomorrow must be as this day, is as absurd as to think that the weather, when either fair or foul, will be always so.

Elihu says, that when Job looked up to God, he had no just reason to speak thus despairingly. There is a day of judgment before him, when all the seeming disorders of Providence will be set to rights, and the dark chapters of it will be expounded. When we consider that God is infinitely wise, and righteous, and faithful, and that he is a God of judgment, Isa. 30. 18, we shall see no reason to despair of relief from him.

If he had not yet seen an end of his troubles, the reason was, Because he did not thus trust in God, and wait for him. If there be any mixtures of Divine wrath in our afflictions, we may thank ourselves; it is because we do not behave aright under them; we quarrel with God, are fretful and impatient, and distrustful of the Divine Providence. This was Job's case. Elihu concludes therefore that Job opens his mouth in vain.

It is in vain for us to appeal to God, or to acquit ourselves, if we do not study to answer the end for which affliction is sent; and in vain to pray for relief, if we do not trust in God; let not that man who distrusts God, think that he shall receive any thing from him, James 1. 7. Having showed the absurdity of some passages in Job's discourse, Elihu concludes that there were many other passages which were, in like manner, the fruits of his ignorance and mistake. He did not, as his other friends, condemn him for a hypocrite, but charges him only with Moses' sin, speaking unadvisedly with his lips. When at any time we do so, and who is there that offends not in word? it is a

mercy to be told of it, and we must take it patiently and kindly as Job did; not repeating, but recalling, what we have said amiss.

Elihu was directed by God to humble Job, and had ground to tell him, that as to some things he had both opened his mouth in vain, and had multiplied words without knowledge. It is true his afflictions were very great, yet Elihu censures him deservedly because he took too much notice of them, complaining often how heavy the hand of God was upon him, and that God was an enemy to him; whereas he should have looked upon the visitation of God as light and easy compared with what his sin might justify God in laying upon him. Therefore let us be admonished that in all our afflictions we do not so much set forth the greatness of our suffering as the greatness of the mercy of God.—(15.)

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Ver. 1-4. *Elihu desires Job's attention.*

Elihu, having largely reproved Job for some of his unadvised speeches, here comes more generally to his notions of God's dealings with him. Job's other friends had urged, that, because he was a wicked man, therefore his afflictions were so great and so long. But Elihu only maintained that the affliction was sent for his trial, and that it was lengthened, because Job was not, as yet, thoroughly humbled under it, nor had duly accommodated himself to it. He urges many reasons, taken from the wisdom and righteousness of God, his care of his people, and especially his greatness and almighty power, with which, in this and the following chapter, he persuades him to submit to the hand of God.

He pleads that he had a good cause, a noble and fruitful subject; I have yet to speak on God's behalf. They that have spoken ever so much, may yet find more to be spoken on God's behalf. It is worth while to go far for this knowledge of God; it will recompense our pains. All he aimed at was, to ascribe righteousness to his Maker; to maintain and clear this truth, that God is righteous in all his ways. He will make use of plain and solid arguments, and not of subtilties and niceties. The perfection of our knowledge, in this world, is, to be honest and sincere in searching out truth, in applying it to

ourselves, and in making use of what we know for the good of others. Such knowledge must be derived from the word and Spirit of God, for naturally we are estranged from it.

The adaptation of Elihu's discourse to the dispute between Job and his friends is evident. It pointed out to Job the true reason of those afflictive dispensations with which he had been visited. It taught him that God had acted in mercy towards him, and the spiritual benefit he was to derive from them. It corrected also the mistake of his friends, and showed them that Job's calamities had not been punishment for immoralities committed by him, as they supposed; but that those calamities were to prepare him for further discoveries of Divine compassion, and to promote his most important interests.—(1.)

Ver. 5-14. *The different methods in which God deals with men.*

Elihu here shows that the disposals of Divine Providence are all according to the eternal rules of equity. God acts as a righteous Governor. For he does not think it below him to take notice of the meanest of his subjects. Job thought himself and his cause slighted, because God did not immediately appear for him. No, said Elihu, God despises not any. They that are wise and good, will not look upon any with scorn and disdain.

He gives no countenance to the greatest, if they are bad. He preserves not their life so long as they expected, nor with that comfort and satisfaction which are indeed our life; and their preservation is but a reservation for the day of wrath, Rom. 2. 5. He is always ready to right those that are injured. If men will not right them, God will. He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous. Though they may seem sometimes neglected and forgotten, yet the tender careful eye of their heavenly Father never withdraws from them. If our eye be ever toward God in duty, his eye will be ever upon us in mercy, and when we are at the lowest, will not overlook us.

When righteous persons are advanced to places of honour and power, God's grace will arm them against temptations, and enable them to improve the opportunity of doing good. It is also in mercy to those over whom they are set. But because it is not often that we see good men made great men in this world, this may refer to the honour to which the righ-

teous shall rise when their Redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; for then only they shall be exalted for ever, and established for ever. Then shall they all shine forth as the sun, and be made kings and priests to our God.

If at any time he bring them into affliction, it is for the good of their souls. Now observe, If they are bound in fetters, laid in prison, as Joseph was, or holden in the cords of any other affliction; this was Job's case; he was caught, and kept fast, in the cords of anguish, as some read it; the design God has in bringing his people into such distresses, is for the benefit of their souls. Three things God intends when he afflicts us. 1. To discover past sins to us, and to bring them to our remembrance. Affliction sometimes answers to the sin; it serves, however, to awaken the conscience, and puts men upon considering. 2. To dispose our hearts to receive present instructions; affliction makes people willing to learn, yet it does not do it of itself, but the grace of God working with and by it. 3. To deter us from iniquity for the future. It is a command to return from iniquity, to have no more to do with sin, to turn from it with aversion, Hos. 14. 8.

If the affliction do its work, and accomplish that for which it is sent, God will comfort them again, according to the time that he has afflicted them. Piety is the only sure way to prosperity and pleasure; this is a certain truth, and yet few will believe it. If we faithfully serve God, we have the *promise* of outward prosperity, the promise of the life that now is, and the comforts of it, as far as is for God's glory and our good; and who would desire them any further? We have the *possession* of inward pleasures, the comfort of communion with God, and a good conscience, and that great peace which they have that love God's law. If we rejoice not in the Lord always, and in hope of eternal life, it is our own fault: what better pleasures can we spend our years in?

If the affliction do not do its work, let them expect the furnace to be heated till they are consumed. If they are not bettered by their afflictions, are not reclaimed and reformed, they shall perish by the sword of God's wrath. They shall die without knowledge, ere they are aware; or they shall die because they were without knowledge, notwithstanding the means of knowledge they were blessed with. They

that die without knowledge die without grace, and are undone for ever.

God brings ruin upon hypocrites, who, though they were numbered among the righteous, yet being children of disobedience and darkness, become children of wrath and perdition. See the nature of hypocrisy; it lies in the heart—that is for the world and the flesh, when the outside seems to be for God and religion. See the mischievousness of it; hypocrites heap up wrath. Observe what they do to heap up wrath. When they are in affliction, bound with the cords of trouble, they are stubborn and unhumiliated, and will not cry to God. What are the effects of that wrath? Whether sinners die in youth or live long—to heap up wrath, their case is dreadful. The souls of the wicked live after death, but they live among the unclean spirits, the devil and his angels, for ever separated from the New Jerusalem, into which no unclean thing shall enter.

Ver. 15—23. *Elihu warns and counsels Job.*

Elihu here comes more closely to Job; and tells him what God would have done for him, if he had been duly humbled under his affliction. It ought to silence us under our afflictions, to consider that if we were better, it would be every way better with us: if we had answered the ends of an affliction, the affliction would be removed; and deliverance would come, if we were ready for it, Ps. 81. 13, 14; Isa. 48. 18.

He charges him with standing in his own light, and makes him the cause of the continuance of his own trouble. Whatever thou art really, thou hast spoken and done like the wicked; and therefore judgment and justice take hold on thee as such.

He cautions him not to persist in his frowardness. Let him not make light of Divine vengeance, nor be secure, as if he were in no danger of it. This was a friendly caution to Job, and necessary. Even good men have need to be kept to their duty by the fear of God's wrath, for the wisest and best have enough in them to deserve his stroke.

Let him not think that he could find out ways to escape God's wrath. There is no escaping by money; no purchasing a pardon with silver or gold, and such corruptible things. No escaping by rescue; if thou couldst muster ever so many to force thee out of the hands of Divine vengeance, it were all in vain. No

escaping by absconding. God's eyes are open upon the children of men, not only in all places, but at all times. Some understand it of the night of death; that is the night by which men are cut off from their place, and Job had earnestly breathed for that night, as the hireling desires the evening, ch. 7. 2. But do not do so, says Elihu, for thou knowest not what the night of death is.

Let not Job continue his unjust quarrel with God and his providence, which hitherto he had persisted in. Let us never dare to think a favourable thought of sin, never indulge it, nor allow ourselves in it. Elihu thinks Job had need of this caution, he having chosen rather to gratify his own pride and humour in contending with God, than to mortify it by submission, and accepting the punishment. We may observe, that they that choose iniquity rather than affliction, make a very foolish choice; they that ease their cares by sinful pleasures, increase their wealth by sinful pursuits, escape their troubles by sinful projects, and evade sufferings for righteousness' sake by sinful compliances against their consciences, make a choice they will repent of; there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction.

Let him not dare to prescribe to God. Consider that God is an absolute Sovereign; let us then leave it to him to govern the world who is fit to do it. "Who teaches like him?" It is absurd for us to teach Him who is himself the Fountain of light, truth, knowledge, and instruction. He teaches by the bible, and that is the best book; teaches by his Son, and he is the best Master. He is unexceptionably just in all his proceedings.

Ver. 24—33. *The wonders God sheweth in the works of nature.*

Elihu here endeavours to possess Job with high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him into a cheerful submission to his providence. Look which way we will, we see the productions of God's wisdom and power. Every man may see afar off the heaven and all its lights, the earth and all its fruits, to be the work of Omnipotence: much more when we behold them nigh at hand. Look at the minutest works of nature through a microscope; do they not appear curious? Man may see God's works, and is capable of discerning his hand in them, which the beasts are not, and therefore ought to praise him, and give him the glory.

He represents God, the Author of them, as infinite and unsearchable. We know not the duration of his existence, for it is infinite: the number of his years cannot possibly be searched out, for he is eternal. He gives instances of God's wisdom, power, and dominion, in the works of nature, and the dispensations of common providence; beginning in this chapter with the clouds, and the rain that descends from them. The general scope is to show that God is infinitely great, and the Lord of all, the first Cause and supreme Director of all the creatures, and has all power in heaven and earth. That it is presumption for us to prescribe the rules and methods of his special providence, when the operations even of common providences are so mysterious and unaccountable.

The clouds and rain, with the thunders and lightnings, declare his goodness, and proclaim the power of his wrath. Each object bears a double aspect; while the worker of iniquity ought to tremble, the true believer should rejoice. Children should hear with pleasure their Father's voice, even when he speaks in terror to his enemies. The cattle also, by instinct, are apprehensive of change nigh at hand, and seek for shelter, shaming man, who will not foresee the evil, and hide himself.

There is no light but there may be a cloud to intercept it. Even the light of the favour of God, the light of his countenance, which is the most blessed light of all, even that light hath many a cloud. The clouds of our sins cause the Lord to cloud his face with anger and displeasure, and hinder the light of his favour and loving kindness from shining upon our souls.—(15.)

32, 33. Perhaps these difficult verses should be rendered, "He covereth the concave with lightning, and charges it what it shall strike. Its noise declareth concerning him; a magazine of wrath against iniquity."—*Greenfield*.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Ver. 1—13. *Elihu observes the power of God in thunder and lightning, rain, frost, &c.*

Elihu desired to affect Job with the appearances of God's glory in the thunder and lightning. It is a sensible indication of what God could do to this sinful world, and what he will do at last by the fire to which it is reserved. Our hearts, like Elihu's, should tremble at it for fear of God's judgments, Ps. 119. 120. He also calls upon Job to attend to it. They

that are themselves affected with God's greatness, should labour to affect others. The inference he draws from all this is, Does God thunder thus marvellously with his voice? We must then conclude that his other works are great, and such as we cannot comprehend. From this one instance we may argue to all; that, in the dispensations of his providence, there is that which is too great, too strong for us to oppose or strive against.

The changes of the weather are the subject of a great deal of our common talk and observation; but how seldom do we think and speak of these things, as Elihu does here, with an awful regard to God, the Director of them, who shows his power, and serves the purposes of his providence by them! We must take notice of the glory of God, not only in the thunder and lightning, but in the more common and less awful changes of the weather; as the snow and rain. The power of God is to be observed as much in the small rain that soaks into the earth, as in the great rain that washes away all before it. The providence of God is to be acknowledged both by husbandmen in the fields, and travellers upon the road, in every shower of rain, whether it does them a kindness or an unkindness. It is sin and folly to contend with God's providence in the weather; if he send the snow or rain, can we hinder them? And it is as absurd to quarrel with other disposals of Providence concerning ourselves or ours.

The effect of the severity of the winter weather is, that it obliges both men and beasts to retire, making it uncomfortable and unsafe for them to go abroad. When we are, upon any account, not able to follow our worldly business, and taken off from it, we should spend our time rather in exercises of piety and devotion, than in foolish idle sports and recreations. The less we have at any time to do in the world, the more we should do for God and our souls. Nature directs all creatures to shelter themselves from a storm; and shall man only be unprovided with an ark? The attentive mind will perceive much of the power, wisdom, goodness, and majesty of God in the operations of nature. O that men would attentively listen to the voice of God, who in various ways warns them to flee from the wrath to come; and from his mercy-seat with a voice less terrible, but of more glo-

rious excellency, invites them to accept of his salvation, and to be happy.

The counsels and commands of God extend even to those things that seem most casual and minute; for the stormy winds, and the clouds that are driven by them, fulfil his word; and by this means he causes it to rain upon one city, and not upon another, Amos 4. 7, 8. Thus his will is done among the children of men. Rain sometimes turns into a judgment; at other times it is a blessing. See what necessary dependence we have upon God, when the very same thing, according to the proportion in which it is given, may be either a great judgment or a great mercy; and without God we cannot have either a shower or a fair gleam. The ill opinion which men entertain of the Divine direction, peculiarly appears in their constant murmurs about the weather, though the whole result of the year proves the folly and ingratitude of their complaints. Believers should carefully avoid this; there are no bad days as God makes them, though we make many to be such by our sins.

1. It is probable that at this time, when Elihu was speaking, it thundered and lightened, for he speaks of it as present; and God being about to speak, ch. 38. 1, these were, as afterward on mount Sinai, the proper prefaces to command attention and awe.—Henry.

Ver. 14—20. *Job required to explain the works of nature.*

Elihu here applies himself closely to Job, desiring him to apply what he had hitherto said to himself. We are not likely to consider things fully, unless we stand still and compose ourselves to the consideration of them. The due consideration of the works of God will help to reconcile us to all his providences.

Elihu, for the humbling of Job, shows him that he had no insight into natural causes; could neither see the springs of them, nor foresee the effects of them. To God's knowledge there is nothing distant, but all near; nothing future, but all present; nothing hid, but all open. The greatest philosophers are in the dark concerning the powers and works of nature. Who can fully comprehend the operations of God? It is good for us to be made sensible of our own ignorance; some have confessed it. We know not what orders God has given concerning the clouds, nor what orders he will give, ver. 15; and we know not how the comfortable change comes when the winter is

past, ver. 17. As God has a powerful, freezing north wind, so he has a thawing, composing south wind; the Spirit is compared to both, because he both convinces and comforts, Cant. 4. 16.

Neither he nor they were able to speak of the glory of God, in any proportion to the merit of the subject. Elihu owns his own insufficiency, both in speaking to God, and in speaking of him. The best of men are much in the dark concerning the glorious perfections of the Divine nature, and the administrations of the Divine government. They that through grace know much of God, know little, nothing, in comparison with what is to be known, and what will be known, when that which is perfect is come. When we would speak of God, we speak with great uncertainty, and are soon at a loss for want of words. Elihu had spoken well on God's behalf, and yet is even ashamed of what he has said—not of the cause, but of his own management of it. When we have done all we can for God, we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants. If a man speak presumptuously, God's wrath shall soon consume him: but if well, he will soon lose himself in the mystery.

18. The looking-glasses, or rather the mirrors, in ancient times, were of metal highly polished. Ver. 21—24. *God is great, and is to be feared.*

Elihu here concludes his discourse with some great sayings concerning the glory of God. If our meditations lead us to more admiring views of God's greatness, holiness, wisdom, and goodness—if they issue in a deeper sense of our own ignorance and sinfulness—if they warn us to reverence and to submit to Him, and to cease from our own wisdom; the effect will be honourable to him, useful to us, and edifying to our brethren. Whatever scenes we witness, whatever changes we experience, we may stay our minds on the Lord Jesus Christ, who will give strength to his people, and bless them with his unspeakable peace.

He hastens to conclude, now that God is about to speak; and therefore delivers a few words, as the sum of all that he had been discoursing of. That with God is terrible majesty. He is a God of glory. That, when we speak touching the Almighty, we must own that our finite understandings cannot comprehend his infinite perfections. That he is excellent in power. He can do whatever he pleases in

heaven and earth. That he is no less excellent in wisdom and righteousness. When he executes judgments upon sinners, he inflicts not more than they deserve. That he will not afflict, that is, he will not afflict willingly. He never afflicts but when there is cause, and when there is need, and he does not over-burden us with affliction, but considers our frame. He values not the censures of those that are wise in their own conceit. He regards the prayer of the humble, but not the policies of the crafty. From all this it is easy to infer, that since God is great, he is greatly to be feared; nay, because he is gracious, and will not afflict men do therefore fear him, for there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, Ps. 130. 4. It is the duty and interest of all men to fear God. Sooner or later they shall fear him. They that will not fear the Lord and his goodness, shall for ever tremble under his wrath.

When from the world of nature we are enabled to follow the Lord into the world of grace, and when from the common blessings of his providence in creation, we are led to behold the special blessings of his love in redemption, what a vast and unlimited field for contemplation is thrown open to a poor sinner's view! We cannot tell, as Elihu beautifully expresses, how our garments make us warm when the Lord quieteth the earth by the south wind. And can it be a wonder that we are not able to explain how it is that the robe of Christ's righteousness becomes a complete justifying garment, to clothe the soul, and to make him that is in himself unclean, yet in Christ holy, blessed, and sanctified? Sad indeed that men should be unbelievers in a point of so much mercy, when their daily experience in the common things of God's providence compels them cordially to assent to what they cannot explain.—(87.)

22. "Out of the north cometh the golden light."—Fry. Some have supposed that this denotes a glorious appearance of the Divine Majesty which now approached. The Greek version is, "Out of the north come clouds of a golden colour; and there is in them a terrible brightness and glory of the Almighty."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Ver. 1—3. *God calls upon Job to answer.*

Job and his friends had appealed to the Lord, and wished for him to decide their controversy. Job had silenced, but had

not convinced his friends. Elihu had silenced Job, but had not brought him to admit his guilt before God. It pleased the Lord to interpose. That which the great God designs in this discourse is to humble Job, and bring him to repent of his passionate expressions concerning God's providential dealings with him; and this he does by calling upon Job to compare God's eternity with his own time, God's omniscience with his own ignorance, and God's omnipotence with his own impotency.

Let us observe here who speaks—The Lord Jehovah; not a created angel, but the eternal Word himself, the second Person in the blessed Trinity, for it is he by whom the worlds were made, and that was no other than the Son of God. He addressed Job, to convince him of what was amiss before he cleared him from the unjust aspersions cast upon him. It is God only that can effectually convince of sin; and those shall so be humbled whom he designs to exalt. Those who desire to hear from God, as Job did, shall certainly hear from him at length.

God charges him with ignorance, and presumption in what he had said. "Who is this?" Is it a man? That weak, foolish, despicable creature—shall he pretend to prescribe to me what I must do, or to quarrel with me for what I have done? Is it Job? What! my servant Job, a perfect and an upright man? Can he so far forget himself, and act unlike himself? Who, where is he that darkens counsel thus by words without knowledge? Darkening the counsels of God's wisdom with our folly, is a great provocation to God. They are a deep which we cannot fathom; yet we are too apt to talk of them as if we understood them. A humble faith and sincere obedience shall see further and better into the secret of the Lord than all philosophy and human science. This first word which God spake is the more observable, because Job, in his repentance, fastens upon it as that which humbled him, ch. 42. 3. The condescension of the God of glory, in making himself known to sinful man for his humiliation, instead of punishing him for his rebellion, demands our greatest admiration and gratitude.

Ver. 4—11. *God questions Job concerning the formation of the earth, and limiting the sea.*

For the humbling of Job, God here shows him his ignorance, even concerning

the earth and the sea. He could give no account of their origin, much less of heaven or hell, and least of all of the Divine counsels. If he have such an insight, as he pretends to have, into the counsels of God, let him give some account of the earth he goes upon, which is given to the children of men.

These questions were suitable to convince Job of the infinite knowledge, wisdom, and power of the eternal God, and of his own ignorance and unfitness to judge of his appointments. At the creation of the earth the holy angels, the morning stars of the creation, the sons of God, adored and rejoiced. And would Job, who then had no existence, would he find fault with the work which they admired? Or would he suppose the dispensations of his Providence to be less perfect than the work of creation? and how would he dare to decide on other still more mysterious works of God? Therefore, as we cannot find fault with God's work, so we need not be in fear concerning it; the works of his providence, as well as the work of creation, the measures of neither can ever be broken; and the work of redemption is no less firm, of which Christ himself is both the Foundation and the Corner-stone. The church stands as fast as the earth.

Observe here, 1. The glory of God, as the Creator of the world, is to be celebrated with joy and triumph by all his creatures that have reason. 2. The work of angels is to praise God; the more we abound in holy, humble, thankful, joyful praise, the more we do the will of God as they do it; and as we are so barren and defective in praising God, it is a comfort to think that they are doing it in a better manner. 3. They were unanimous in singing God's praises; they sang together with one accord. The sweetest concerts are in praising God. 4. They all did it, even those who afterward fell, and left their first estate; even those who have praised God, may, by the deceitful power of sin, be brought to blaspheme him, and yet God will be eternally praised.

Ver. 12—24. *Concerning the light and the darkness.*

The Lord here asks Job many confounding questions, to convince him of his ignorance, and so to shame him for his folly in prescribing to God. If we try ourselves with such interrogatories as these, we shall soon be brought to own that

what we know is nothing in comparison with what we know not.

Job is here challenged to give some account of six things.

1. Of the springs of the morning, the day-spring from on high. Whether what is here said of the morning light was designed to represent, as in a figure, the light of the gospel of Christ or not, it may put us in mind of what is said of the gospel just at the rising of its Morning-star by Zecharias, Luke 1. 78. By the tender mercy of our God, the Day-spring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, whose hearts are turned to it as clay to the seal, 2 Cor. 4. 6. The virgin Mary too, Luke 1. 51, shows that God, in his gospel, has showed strength with his arm, scattered the proud, and put down the mighty, by that light which he designed to shake the wicked, to shake wickedness itself out of the earth, and break its high arm.

2. Of the springs of the sea. God's way in the government of the world is said to be in the sea, and in the great waters. Ps. 77. 19; intimating that it is hid from us, and not to be pried into by us.

3. Of the gates of death. We know not when and how, and by what means, we or others shall be brought to death; for man knows not his time. Let us make sure that the gates of heaven shall be opened to us on the other side death, and then we need not fear the opening of the gates of death. While we are here in a world of sense, we speak of the world of spirits as blind men do of colours, and when we remove thither, shall be amazed to find how much we have been mistaken.

4. Of the breadth of the earth. We have our residence on the earth; God has given it to the children of men; but who ever surveyed it, or could give an account of the number of its acres? It is but a point to the universe; yet, small as it is, we cannot be exact in declaring the dimensions of it. The Divine perfection is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea; it is presumption for us, who perceive not the breadth of the earth, to dive into the depth of God's counsels.

5. Of the place and way of light and darkness. God challenges Job to describe how the light and darkness were at first made. God forms the light, and creates the darkness. We must take them as we find them, as they come, and make the best of both; and, in like manner, we

must accommodate ourselves to the peace and the evil which God likewise created, Is. 45. 7. They still keep their turns interchangeably. It is a marvellous change that passes over us by the returns of the light and of the darkness; but we expect them, and so they are no surprise or uneasiness to us. If we would, in like manner, count upon changes in our outward condition, we should neither in the brightest noon count upon perpetual day, nor in the darkest midnight despair of the return of the morning. God has set the one over against the other, like the day and night; and so must we, Eccl. 7. 14.

6. Of the snow and hail. God can fight as effectually with snow and hail, if he pleases, Josh. 10. 11, as with thunder and lightning, or the sword of an angel! What folly it is to strive against God! how much it is our interest to seek peace with him, and to keep in his love!

14. This verse has caused many conjectures among commentators. The Greek version is, "Hast thou, taking clayey earth, formed of it a living creature, and giving it the faculty of speech, placed it on the earth?"

Ver. 25—41. *By questions concerning other mighty works, God convinces Job of ignorance.*

Hitherto God had put questions to Job to convince him of his ignorance. Now he comes, in the same manner, to show his weakness. As it is but little that he knows, and therefore he ought not to arraign the Divine counsels, so it is but little that he can do, and therefore he ought not to oppose the proceedings of Providence.

1. God has thunder, and lightning, and rain, and frost at command. Observe, how weak man is; can he do such things as these? Will they come at thy call, and say unto thee, Here we are? No, the ministers of God's wrath will not be ministers of ours. Why should they, since the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God? see Luke 9. 55.

2. God has the stars of heaven under his command and cognizance; we have not. The different seasons of the year are marked by the relative situation of the fixed stars to the earth and to the sun. Could Job prevent the effects of the spring, or of the winter? Could he even explain how those effects were produced? If he felt his ignorance therein, let him learn to leave the government of the world to its Creator.

3. God is the Author and Giver, the Father and Fountain of all wisdom and un-

derstanding. The powers of reason with which man is endued, and the wonderful performances of thought, bring him into some alliance to the blessed angels; and whence comes this light, but from the Father of lights? We did not make our own souls, nor can we describe how they act, or how they are united to our bodies. He only that made them, knows them, and knows how to manage them. He fashioneth men's hearts alike in some things, and yet unlike in others. True wisdom, with its furniture and improvement, comes from him as the God of grace, and the Father of every good and perfect gift. Shall we pretend to be wiser than God, who have all our wisdom from him? Nay, shall we pretend to be wise beyond the limits which he that gave us our understanding sets to it? He designed we should with it serve God, and do our duty.

4. God has the clouds under his cognizance and government; but so have not we. The power and goodness of God are to be acknowledged, that he gives the earth rain enough, but does not drown it; makes it fit for the plough, but not unfit for the seed. As we cannot command a shower of rain, so we cannot command a fair day, without God; so necessary, so constant is our dependence upon him.

5. God provides food for the inferior creatures, and it is by his providence, not by any care or pains of ours, that they are fed. The following chapter is wholly taken up with the instances of God's power and goodness about animals; and therefore some transfer to it the three last verses of this chapter. See the all-sufficiency of the Divine Providence; it has wherewithal to satisfy the desire of every living thing, even the most ravenous. See the bounty of the Divine Providence, that, wherever it has given life, will give livelihood, even to those creatures that are not only not serviceable, but dangerous to man. And see its sovereignty, that it suffers some creatures to be killed for the support of other creatures. As ravenous beasts, so ravenous birds are fed by the Divine Providence. Who but God provides for the raven his food? Man does not; he takes care only of those creatures that are, or may be useful to him. But God has a regard to all the works of his hands, even those that appear meanest and least valuable. And he that takes this care of the young ravens, certainly will not be want-

ing to his people, or theirs. This being but one instance of many of the Divine compassion, may give us occasion to think how much good our God does, every day, beyond what we are aware of.

As the world was created by God, so it is governed by Him, and exactly as it should be. The constancy and exactness with which natural effects are produced, should remind us of the faithfulness of the Lord's promises, of the unchangeableness of his counsels, and teach us to be exact in our course of daily obedience; while they encourage us to expect large blessings from his covenant love in Jesus Christ; and to be followers of him in love as his dear children. Every view we take of his infinite perfections, should remind us of his right to our love, the evil of sinning against him, and our need of his mercy and salvation.

The inference to be drawn from every instance of God's power and wisdom here pointed out, is evidently this:—Can such a Maker and Preserver have been unmindful of man, that he should take no concern in the moral government of that creature, which he has made wiser than the beasts of the field? Was it to be supposed that Providence, which was so wonderfully displayed in the formation and preservation of the meanest animal he had placed in the world, should have had no just plan with respect to mankind? Could it be supposed that God should order the events which befall both the wicked and the just, without exercising special care and loving-kindness over those whom he had quickened to a life of righteousness? Job is convicted of arrogance, that he should pronounce on any measure of the righteous Governor of the world, as if it was done by arbitrary will, and not in strictest regard to judgment and justice.—(25.)

31, 32. "Canst thou shut up the delightful teemings of Chimah? or the contractions of Chesil canst thou open? Canst thou draw forth Mazaroth in his season? Or Aish with her sons canst thou guide?" *Hales* states that Chimah is generally considered as denoting the Pleiades, or principal stars in the constellation Taurus. The name signifying "charming," corresponds to the delightful season of spring, of which Taurus was the cardinal constellation in Job's time. Chesil has been considered as denoting Antares, or the Scorpion's heart. Its name, signifying "benumbed," represents the chill season of autumn. Mazaroth denotes Orion. It signifies "raging or furious," and represents the sultry heats of summer. Aish, signifying "a group or assemblage," is contrasted with the southern constellation, and is the northern constellation of Ursa Major, denoting the winter season. See 9, 9.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

God inquires of Job concerning several animals.

In these questions the Lord continued his intention of humbling his servant Job, and teaching him more reverence of his infinite Majesty. In this chapter several animals are spoken of whose nature or situation particularly illustrate the power, wisdom, and manifold works of God. A few circumstances respecting some of them may be noticed.

The wild ass; a creature we frequently read of in scripture; some say, untamable. Man is said to be born as the wild ass's colt, so hard to be governed. Freedom from service, and liberty to range at pleasure, are but the privileges of a wild ass. It is a pity that any of the children of men should covet it, or value themselves on it. It is better to labour and be good for something, than to ramble and be good for nothing. From the untameableness of this and other creatures we may infer, how unfit we are to give law to Providence, who cannot give law even to a wild ass's colt.

The unicorn, Rhem, a strong creature, Numb. 23. 22, a stately, proud creature, Ps. 92. 10. He is able to serve, but not willing; and God here challenges Job to force him to it. There are creatures that are willing to serve man, and seem to take a pleasure in it, and to have a love for their masters; but there are such as will never be brought to it, and it is the effect of sin. Man is revolted from his subjection to his Maker, and is therefore justly punished with the revolt of the inferior creatures from their subjection to him; and yet, as an instance of God's good-will to man, there are some still serviceable to him. It is a great mercy, if, where God gives strength for service, he gives a heart; it is what we should pray for, and reason ourselves into, which the brutes cannot do; for, as among beasts, so among men, those may justly be reckoned wild and abandoned to the deserts, who have no mind either to take pains, or to do good.

God gives his gifts variously, and those gifts are not always the most valuable that make the finest show. Who would not rather have the voice of the nightingale than the tail of the peacock, the eye of the eagle and her soaring wing, and the natural affection of the stork, than the beautiful feathers of the ostrich, which can

never rise above the earth, and is without natural affection?

Observe the circumstances peculiar to the ostrich. As careless as the ostrich is of her eggs, many people are of their own souls; they make no provision for them, no proper nest in which they may be safe; they leave them exposed to Satan and his temptations; a certain evidence that they are deprived of wisdom. So careless are many parents of their children; some, of their bodies, not providing for their own house, and therefore worse than infidels, and as bad as the ostrich; but many more are thus careless of their children's souls, take no care of their education, send them abroad into the world untaught, unarmed, forgetting what corruption there is in the world, which will certainly crush them. Thus their labour in rearing them comes to be in vain; it were better for their country that they had never been born. So careless are too many ministers of their people, with whom they should reside; but they leave them on the earth, and forget how busy Satan is to sow tares while men sleep. They overlook those whom they should oversee, and are really hardened against them.

She leaves her eggs in danger, but, if she herself be in danger, no creature shall strive better to get out of the way of it than the ostrich, ver. 18. Then she lifts up her wings on high, and, with the help of them, runs so fast, that a horseman cannot overtake her. Those persons that are least under the law of natural affection, often contend most for the law of self-preservation.

The description of the war-horse will help to explain that character which is given of presumptuous sinners, Jer. 8. 6. Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. When a man's heart is fully set in him to do evil, and he is carried on in a wicked way by the violence of inordinate appetites and passions, there is no making him afraid of the wrath of God, and the fatal consequences of sin. Let his own conscience set before him the curse of the law, the death that is the wages of sin, and all the terrors of the Almighty in battle array; he mocks at this fear, and is not affrighted, neither turns he back from the flaming sword of the cherubim. Let ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, to proclaim the wrath of God against him; he believes not that it is the sound of the

trumpet, nor that God and his heralds are in earnest with him; but what will be in the end hereof it is easy to foresee.

The eagle is here taken notice of for the height of her flight; no bird soars so high, has so strong a wing, or can so well bear the light of the sun; Doth she mount at thy command? Is it by any strength she has from thee? or dost thou direct her flight? No, it is by the natural power and instinct God has given her, that she will soar out of thy sight, much more out of thy call. Her house is her castle and strong hold; she makes it on high and on the rock, which sets her and her young out of the reach of danger. Secure sinners think themselves as safe in their sins as the eagle in her nest on high, in the clefts of the rock, But I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord, Jer. 49. 16. Her eyes behold afar off, not upward, but downward, in quest of her prey. In this, she is an emblem of a hypocrite, who, while, in the profession of religion, he seems to rise toward heaven, keeps his eye and heart upon the prey on earth, some temporal advantage, under pretence of devotion. She preys upon living animals; her young ones are taught to suck up blood; they do it by instinct, and know no better; but for men that have reason and conscience, to thirst after blood, is what could scarcely be believed, if there had not been, in every age, wretched instances of it.

All these beautiful references to the works of nature should impress us with a right view of the "riches of the wisdom" of Him that made and sustaineth all things. These impressions we are to carry with us, when we consider the dealings of God in the way of providence, and in his ordering of all events as the great Governor of the universe. Can we suppose there is any thing here without the greatest wisdom, when He has put forth so much skill and contrivance in the forming and ordering of these inferior animals? Will not he do all things well concerning man, the greatest of his works? In this higher matter are we to suppose there is less wisdom and design manifested than in the inferior works of his hand? Thus our blessed Lord would increase the confidence of his disciples in his providential care of them; "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them falleth to the ground without your Father? Fear not. Are ye not

much better than they? or of more value than many sparrows?" Luke 12. 7. The want of such due impressions concerning the wisdom of God ever present in all things, had led Job to think and speak unworthily of that dispensation of Providence under which he lived, as being arbitrary, discovering no wisdom, nor manifesting the righteous Governor of all things. His despairing mind seemed to think that the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God could only be manifested in a future state. Therefore Job despaired of life, and longed for death.—(25.)

5. The onager or wild ass is a much larger and nobler animal than the domestic ass. The best horses are inferior in swiftness, and the Arabs say it cannot be tamed.

9. The rhem, reem, or unicorn is generally supposed to be the rhinoceros.

13. The word translated peacock is one of the Hebrew names for the ostrich. *Dr. Shaw* notices the ostrich as "fanning and priding itself with its quivering, expanded wings." This bird is seven feet high from the head to the ground; and by the assistance of its wings runs with such speed as to distance the swiftest horse. The verse may be more accurately rendered, "The wing of the ostrich is quivering or expanded: is it the wing of the stork and its plumage?" Is it, like that, employed in protecting and providing for the creature's offspring? No. She leaveth her eggs, &c.—See *Carpenter*.

26. Most of the species of hawks are birds of passage, which is here referred to. Their migration is not conducted by the wisdom of man, but by the providence of God.—*Carpenter*.

CHAPTER XL.

Ver. 1-5. *Job humbles himself to God.*

Communion with God effectually convinces and humbles a saint, and makes him glad to part with his most beloved sins. There is need of thorough convictions and humiliation to prepare us for remarkable deliverances. Men may be humbled, and yet need to be further humbled.—(10.)

It behoves us to speak with great reverence of the ways and works of God, for it will often appear that our expressions sprang from such principles and led to such conclusions as we cannot but condemn. After God had shown Job, by his manifest ignorance in the works of nature, what an incompetent judge he was of the methods and designs of Providence, he puts a convincing question to him; Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? Shall he pretend to dictate to God's wisdom, or prescribe to his will? We are ignorant, but before him all things are open; we are foolish, but his wisdom

is infinite; we are dependent creatures, but he is the sovereign Creator; and shall we pretend to instruct him?

Now Job began to melt into godly sorrow; when his friends reasoned with him, he did not yield; but the voice of the Lord is powerful. When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince. They had condemned him for a wicked man; but we have reason to expect better treatment from God, and a more candid construction of what we do, than we meet with from our friends. This the good man is here overcome by, and yields himself to the grace of God. He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say in his own justification. Not only mean and contemptible, but vile and abominable in his own eyes. He is now sensible that he has sinned, and therefore calls himself vile. Sin debases us, and penitents abase themselves. Repentance changes men's opinion of themselves. Job now is convinced of his error, and owns himself utterly unable to stand before God, or to produce any thing worth his notice. While his friends talked with him, he answered them. God demanded an answer. Here he gives the reason of his silence. Those that are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness, dare not justify themselves before God.

He promises not to offend as he had done. When we have spoken amiss, we must repent of it, and not repeat or stand to it. He enjoins himself silence. Observe here what true repentance is. 1. It is to rectify our errors, and the false principles we went upon, in doing as we did. What we have long, and often, and vigorously maintained, we must retract as soon as we are convinced that it is a mistake. 2. It is to return from every by-path, and to proceed not one step further in it; "I will not add," so the word is. Till it comes to this, we come short of repentance. Further observe, Those who dispute with God, will be silenced at last. Job had been very bold and forward in demanding a conference with God; he would make his case plain, and he was sure that he should be justified; but he lets fall his plea; "Lord, the wisdom and right are all on thy side, and I have done foolishly and wickedly in questioning it."

The voice of God, and the declaration of his glorious perfections, convinced Job of his rashness. He perceived that he was a poor, mean, foolish, sinful creature,

who ought not to have uttered one word reflecting upon the Divine conduct.

One distinct view of God's holy nature would appal the stoutest rebel, if not tempered with discoveries of mercy. How then will the wicked bear the sight of his glory at the day of judgment? Even believers have but faint views of this glory. If they saw it more clearly, their self-complacency would be turned into self-abhorrence. Their whole characters would appear in another light. They would be silent, not knowing what to answer, aware of having spoken more than they could justify. But when we see this glory revealed in Jesus Christ, we shall be humbled without being terrified; the deepest self-abasement may be consistent with filial love.

Ver. 6—14. *God calls upon Job to show his righteousness, power, and wisdom.*

God here proceeds to reason with Job as before. Observe, that those who receive what they have heard from God, and profit by it, shall hear more from him. And those who are truly convinced of sin, yet have need to be more thoroughly convinced, and to be made more deeply penitent. When our hearts begin to melt and relent within us, let those considerations be dwelt upon and pursued, which will help to make a thorough effectual thaw of it. We must acknowledge,

1. That we cannot vie with God for justice; that the Lord is righteous and holy in his dealings with us, but that we are unrighteous and unholy in our conduct toward him; we have a great deal to blame ourselves for, but nothing to blame him for, ver. 8. Many of Job's complaints had too much tendency this way. Our duty is to condemn ourselves, that God may be righteous.

2. We cannot pretend to vie with God for power. To convince Job that he was not so able as he thought, to contest with God, the Lord shows him that all the force man could raise against the Almighty, would be but like briars and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa. 27. 4. Hast thou, a poor weak worm of the earth, an arm comparable to his, who upholds all things? Man cannot speak so convincingly, so powerfully, nor with such a commanding, conquering force as God, who speaks and it is done.

3. If thou wilt enter into a comparison with him. Appear in all the martial, in all the royal pomp thou hast, array thy-

self with glory and beauty, such as may awe thine enemies, and charm thy friends; but what is it all to the Divine majesty and beauty? No more than the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun, when he goes forth in his strength:

4. That we cannot vie with God for dominion over the proud. Here the cause is put upon this short issue—if Job can humble and abase proud tyrants and oppressors as easily and effectually as God can, it shall be acknowledged that he has some pretence to compare with God. Observe here the wrath of God, scattered among the proud, will humble them, and bring them down. If he casts abroad the rage of his wrath, as he will do at the great day, and sometimes does in this life, the stoutest heart cannot hold out against him. God can, and does easily abase proud tyrants. He can, and will, at last, do it effectually: so complete will the victory be, that God will gain, at last, over proud sinners that set themselves in opposition to him. No doubt God, but he only, has power enough to humble and bring down proud men, he has wisdom enough to know when and how to do it, and it is not for us to prescribe to him, or to teach him how to govern the world. Unless we had an arm like God, we must not think to take his work out of his hands.

The progressive renewal of a believer, proceeds in the same way of conviction, humbling, and watchfulness against remaining sin, as his first conversion to God. When convinced of many evils in our conduct, we still need convincing of many more.

It is the innate pride and ambition of man, that he would be his own saviour, and be independent; but it is presumption to pretend to it. Our own hands cannot save us by recommending us to God's grace, much less by rescuing us from his justice. Since we cannot do this, we must confess unto him, that our own hands cannot save us, and therefore into his hand we must commend ourselves.

Ver. 15-24. *God's power shown in Behemoth.*

God, for the further proving of his own power, and disproving of Job's pretensions, describes two vast animals, far exceeding man in bulk and strength; one he calls Behemoth, the other Leviathan. In these verses, we have the former described.

Behemoth signifies beasts. Some understand it of an amphibious animal, well known in Egypt, called the river-horse, or

hippopotamus. Others think that the elephant is thus described. Observe the use to be made of this description. This vast animal, as here described, argues an argument with us to humble ourselves before the great God; for he made this vast animal, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made. Whatever strength this, or any other creature has, it is derived from God. We need not go far for proofs and instances of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion; they are near, they are with us, wherever we are.

"He that made him, can make his sword to approach to him." God that gave to all the creatures their being, may take away the being he gave. And he can do it; he that has power to create with a word, no doubt, has power to destroy with a word, and can as easily speak the creature into nothing, as, at first, he spake it out of nothing. The behemoth, perhaps, is intended to represent those proud tyrants and oppressors, whom God had just now challenged Job to abase and bring down. They think themselves as well fortified against the judgments of God, as the behemoth with his bones of brass and iron; but he that made the soul of man, knows all the avenues to it, and can make the sword of justice, his wrath, to approach and touch it in the most tender and sensible part. Wo to him that strives with his Maker; for he that made, has power to make him miserable, and will not make him happy, unless he will be ruled by him.

Or take it, "He that made him hath furnished him with weapons." There is no creature but hath some way for its defence. As for man, the chief, God hath given him reason, whereby to provide all lawful means for his preservation and defence. Take it also spiritually, God having made any man a new creature, gives him a sword, and means of defence to preserve himself in his spiritual being. Every godly man hath spiritual weapons, the whole armor of God for his defence against the devil, his spiritual enemy. The apostle, Eph. 6. 16, 17, shows us what weapons God hath made for the preservation of man in his spiritual state. Thus God hath armed the new creature; he that made him hath made him weapons of defence and offence, to save his soul from the wounds of temptation, and to resist, yea, to overcome the tempter, that his immortal soul may be safe,

whatever becomes of his frail flesh and mortal body.—(15.)

CHAPTER XLI.

Concerning Leviathan.

The description here given of the leviathan, a very large, strong, formidable fish, or water-animal, is designed yet further to convince Job of his own impotency, and of God's omnipotence, that he might be humbled for his folly.

Whether this leviathan be a whale or a crocodile, is disputed. In these verses, God shows how unable Job was to master the leviathan. Job is hereby admonished not to proceed in his controversy with God, but to make his peace with him, remembering what the end certainly will be if he come to an engagement: see Isa. 27. 4, 5. Thence he infers how unable he was to contend with the Almighty. None are so fool-hardy as to stir up the leviathan, it being known that he will certainly be too hard for them; and who then is able to stand before God, either to impeach and arraign his proceeding, or to out-face the power of his wrath? If the inferior creatures that are put under the feet of man, and over whom he has dominion, keep us in awe thus, how terrible must the majesty of our great Lord be, who has a sovereign dominion over us, and against whom man has been so long in rebellion! Who can stand before him when once he is angry?

God, having, ver. 1—10, showed Job how unable he was to deal with the leviathan, then sets forth his own power in that mighty creature. God gives a very minute description of the leviathan; for his works appear most beautiful and excellent, and his wisdom and power appear most in them, when they are viewed in their several parts and proportions. Having given a particular account of his parts, and his power, and his comely proportion, he concludes that he is a king over all the children of pride. He has more to be proud of than the proudest people in the world have; and so it is a mortification to the haughtiness and lofty looks of men. Whatever bodily accomplishments men are proud of, and puffed up with, the leviathan excels them.

If such sublime language as is here used be proper to describe the terrible force of leviathan, what words can express the power of God's indignation, who is a con-

suming fire? He will show himself an avenger upon all those who proudly exalt themselves against him; and who may stand in his sight when he is angry? But he more delights in showing his glory from the mercy-seat, encouraging sinners to take refuge under the shadow of his wings, and to humble themselves before him. If his anger be thus turned away from us, then his Almighty power will be our protection; we need fear no enemy, though more formidable than leviathan. Satan is the king and father of all the children of pride. He cannot be resisted by our puny arm. Our own wisdom and strength are unavailing in the contest; his heart is hardened against compassion, he hath been the murderer of souls from the beginning; he looks on all the proud and lofty as his own. But the poor in spirit, who humbly trust the Lord's mercy, are safe; relying on the Almighty they may resist even that tremendous foe, and will be made more than conquerors over him. Let them remember they are saved wholly by grace; "For who hath prevented the Lord that he should repay him?" If mercifully rescued from the malice of Satan, they have no right to complain of any affliction or distress, or to boast of any wisdom or strength of their own. Under a humbling sense of their own vileness let them revere the Divine Majesty; take and fill their allotted place, cease from their own wisdom, and give all glory to their gracious God and Saviour. Remembering from whom every good gift cometh, and for what end it was given, let us walk uprightly and humbly with the Lord; for before honour is humility.

2. In the east, men frequently lead oxen and buffaloes with a ring in their noses.

18. It is said that, under the water, the eyes of the crocodile are exceedingly dull, but when he lifts his head above water, they sparkle with the greatest vivacity. Hence the Egyptians in their hieroglyphics, made the eyes of the crocodile the emblem of the morning.—*A. Clarke.*

Modern writers on scripture natural history are generally agreed in considering the leviathan to be the crocodile. The behemoth is usually considered to be the hippopotamus, but some writers think it must have been one of the vast animals now extinct, skeletons of which are found among fossil organic remains.

Fry considers that the whole description of the behemoth and leviathan is concerning one and the same animal, which when first mentioned is called behemoth or the beast, a name or term applied to beasts in general, and afterwards is spoken of as the leviathan, its proper denomination. He says that "the most convincing proof that all which is said of behemoth and leviathan,

applies to one animal, and that this animal is the crocodile, arises from the agreement of the entire description, with the formation and habits of this monstrous reptile, and with no animal besides." Behemoth, ch. 40. 19, and Leviathan, 41. 23, each is spoken of as unequalled, which cannot be said of two different animals, and the whole of the particulars in the descriptions will be found to agree with the account of the crocodile, as given by travellers and naturalists, while it is probable that in former ages it was even more monstrous and powerful than at the present day, when, however, it is sometimes found to measure from thirty to forty feet in length.

CHAPTER XLII.

Ver. 1-6. *Job humbly submits unto God.*

Job, borne down, as it were, by the torrent of conviction, answered not in his own vindication, but with unreserved submission. He was fully assured that the Lord could do every thing. He knew that none of his impatient thoughts could be concealed from God, therefore he had done wickedly in indulging them. He confessed he had spoken things beyond his knowledge, in a manner which deserved the severest punishment. He was now more sensible than ever of his own guilt and pollution; he would no longer speak in his own excuse, for he abhorred himself as a sinner in heart and life, especially for his presumption in murmuring against God. Of this and all his sins he sincerely repented, and willingly took shame to himself. While he abased his body in dust and ashes, he desired to lie low in self-condemnation before God, casting himself wholly on his mercy, and submitting unreservedly to his will. Job, before this, had spiritual and experimental knowledge of God, but nothing equal to what he now possessed.

He says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear"—many a time from my teachers, when I was young; from my friends, now of late; I have known something of thy greatness, and power, and sovereign dominion; and yet was not brought to submit myself to thee as I ought. The notions I had of these things had not a due influence upon my mind; but now thou hast by immediate revelation discovered thyself to me in thy glorious majesty; "now mine eyes see thee," now I feel the power of those truths which before I had only the notion of, and therefore now I repent, and unsay what I have foolishly said. Note: It is a great mercy to know the things of God by the instructions of his word and ministers; faith

comes by hearing, and it is then most likely to come, when we hear attentively, and with the hearing of the ear. When the understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of grace, our knowledge of Divine things as far exceeds what we had before, as the sight of the eyes exceeds report and common fame. By the teachings of men God reveals his Son to us; but by the teachings of his Spirit he reveals his Son in us, Gal. 1. 16, and so changes us into the same image, 2 Cor. 3. 18.

It concerns us to be deeply humbled for the sins we are convinced of, and not to rest in a slight superficial displeasure against ourselves for them. Even good people, that have no gross enormities to repent of, must be greatly afflicted in soul for the workings and breakings out of pride, passion, peevishness, and discontent, and all their hasty unadvised speeches; for these, we must be pricked to the heart, and be in bitterness. Till the enemy be effectually humbled, the peace will be insecure. True penitents mourn for their sins as heartily as ever they did for any outward afflictions; for they are brought to see more evils in their sins than in their troubles. Self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance; They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed. We must not only be angry at ourselves for the wrong and damage we have by sin done to our own souls, but must abhor ourselves, as having by sin made ourselves odious to the pure and holy God, who cannot endure to look upon iniquity. If sin be truly an abomination to us, sin in ourselves will especially be so. Let us leave it to God to govern the world, and make it our care, in the strength of his grace, to govern ourselves and our own hearts well.

The Lord assuredly will bring those whom he loveth, to submit to and adore him in humble self-abasement. Corrections will continue while they murmur and boast, but when they repent and submit, deliverance draweth nigh. Reflection will often convince us that we were hiding counsel without knowledge, even when we thought we were fully declaring the truth; while true grace will always influence us to confess our sins without hesitation, or self-justifying.

Ver. 7-9. *Job's intercession for his friends.*

After the Lord had spoken unto Job, and had convinced and humbled him,

and brought him to repentance, for what he had said amiss, then he owned him, comforted him, and put honour upon him. We are not ready for God's approbation till we judge and condemn ourselves. The Comforter shall convince, John 16. 8. True penitents shall find favour with God, and what they have said and done amiss, shall no more be mentioned against them. Then God is well pleased with us, when we are brought to abhor ourselves.

God calls him again and again, his servant Job; and he seems to take a pleasure in calling him so, as before his troubles, ch. 1. 8. Though he is poor and despised, he is my servant, and as dear to me as when he was in prosperity; though he has his faults, and has appeared to be a man subject to like passions as others. If we still hold fast the integrity and fidelity of servants to God, as Job did, though we may for a time be deprived of the credit and comfort of the relation, we shall be restored to it at last, as he was. The devil had undertaken to prove Job a hypocrite, and his three friends had condemned him as a wicked man; but God will acknowledge those whom he accepts. If God say, Well done, good and faithful servant, it is of little consequence who says otherwise.

Job's friends had wronged God, by making prosperity a mark of the true church, and affliction a certain indication of God's wrath. Those do the most justice to God and his providence who have regard to the rewards and punishments of another world, more than to those of this; and with the prospect of those solve present difficulties. Job had referred things to the future judgment, and the future state, more than his friends, and therefore he spoke of God that which was right, better than his friends had done.

God promises to accept him and his mediation for his friends. Those whom God washes from their sins, he makes to himself kings and priests. True penitents shall not only find favour as petitioners for themselves, but be accepted as intercessors for others also. It was a great honour that God put upon Job. Thus he became a type of Christ, through whom alone we and our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God, 1 Pet. 2. 5. "Go to my servant Job, to my servant Jesus," from whom for a time the Father hid his face, "put your sacrifices into his hand, make

use of him as your Advocate, for him will I accept, but out of him you must expect to be dealt with according to your folly." And as Job prayed and offered sacrifice for those that had grieved and wounded his spirit, so Christ prayed and died for his persecutors, and ever lives, making intercession for the transgressors.

Job's friends were good men and belonged to God, and therefore He would not let them lie still in their mistake any more than Job; but having humbled him by a discourse out of the whirlwind, he takes another course to humble them. They had censured and condemned Job upon a false hypothesis, had represented God fighting against Job as an enemy, when he was trying him as a friend; and this was not right. Those do not say well of God, who represent his fatherly chastisements of his own children as judicial punishments. Note; It is a dangerous thing to judge uncharitably of the spiritual and eternal state of others, for in so doing we may condemn those whom God has accepted.

God requires from them a sacrifice to make atonement: they must each bring seven bullocks and seven rams, to be offered up to God for a burnt-offering; for it should seem that before the law of Moses, all sacrifices, even those of atonement, were wholly burnt, and therefore were so called. Satisfaction must first be made for the wrong done, according as the nature of the thing requires, before we can hope to obtain from God the forgiveness of sin. Job and his friends had differed in their opinion about many things, and been too severe one upon another, but now they were to be made friends. In order to that, they are not to argue the matter over again, but they must agree in a sacrifice and a prayer, and that must reconcile them: they must unite in affection and devotion, when they could not concur in the same sentiments. Those who differ in judgment about lesser things, yet are one in Christ the great Sacrifice, and meet at the same throne of grace, and therefore ought to love and bear with one another. Once more, observe, when God was angry with Job's friends, he himself put them in a way to make their peace with him. Our quarrels with God always begin on our part, but the reconciliation begins on his.

Job's friends were good men, and as soon as they understood what the mind

of the Lord was, they did as he commanded them, and that speedily, and without gainsaying. Note; Those who would be reconciled to God, must carefully use the prescribed means and methods of reconciliation. Peace with God is to be had only in his own way, and upon his own terms. These will never seem hard to those who know how to value the privilege: they will be glad of it upon any terms, though ever so humbling. In all our approaches to God in his ordinances, mutual concessions, restitutions, and forgivenesses should first be attended to. Nothing cements the affections of believers who have disputed, so much as praying with and for each other; when they enjoy communion with their Saviour they will delight in the communion of saints, and forget all that had interrupted it. And they that conscientiously observe God's commands, need not doubt of his favour. The Lord also accepted Job and his friends, in answer to his prayer. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. It is not said, He accepted them, though that is implied, but, He accepted Job for them; so he has made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph. 1. 6; Matt. 3. 17. Job did not insult over his friends, but God being graciously reconciled to him, he was easily reconciled to them, and then God accepted him. This is what we should aim at in all our prayers and services, to be accepted of the Lord; not to have praise of men, but to please God.

7. From the following verse, where the three friends are directed to go to Job, it should seem that this message of Jehovah came to Eliphaz some time after his appearance to Job. The Lord expressed his displeasure that Eliphaz and his two friends had not addressed that which was "meet," right, fit, or becoming to him; spoken *not concerning him, but to him*. It refers to Job's humble address of penitence to Jehovah, in which, it seems, Eliphaz and his companions had not joined. For this the displeasure of the Lord is declared, and God will honour Job as the instrument of turning away his indignation from them. Eliphaz had spoken by the Divine inspiration. How else can we account for the circumstance that neither confession of sin, nor a demand of sacrifice, is required of him as of Job and the other three friends? The phrase here translated "concerning," is one very frequently occurring in every part of the Hebrew scriptures, and it is invariably "speak to," or address: see the beginning of this very verse, ch. 2. 13; 4. 2; and wherever it is used in this book. It perpetually occurs in the Pentateuch.—Fry.

Ver. 10—17. *Job's renewed prosperity, and happy end.*

Ye have heard of the patience of Job,

says the apostle, Jam. 5. 11, and have seen the end of the Lord, that is, what end the Lord at length put to his troubles. In the beginning of this book we had Job's patience under his troubles, for an example; here for our encouragement to follow that example, we have the happy issue of his troubles. Perhaps, too, the extraordinary prosperity which Job was crowned with after his afflictions, was intended to be, to christians, a type and figure of the glory and happiness of heaven, which the afflictions of this present time are working for us, and in which they will issue at last. This will be more than double to all the delights and satisfactions we now enjoy, as Job's after-prosperity was to his former. He that rightly endures temptation, when he is tried, shall receive a crown of life, Jam. 1. 12, as Job, when he was tried, received wealth, and honour, and comfort. His troubles began in Satan's malice, which God restrained; his restoration began in God's mercy, which Satan could not oppose. Job's sorest complaint was, that God appeared against him; but ~~now~~ God plainly appeared for him. This put a new face upon his affairs: every thing now looked as pleasing as before it had looked gloomy.

Mercy did not return, when Job was disputing with his friends, but when he was praying for them. God is better served and pleased with our warm devotions than with our warm disputations. Christ has taught us to pray with, and for others, in teaching us to say, Our Father; and in seeking mercy for others, we may find mercy ourselves. Our Lord Jesus has his exaltation and dominion there, where he ever lives making intercession. God doubled Job's possessions. God thus recompensed his patience and his confidence in him, which, notwithstanding the workings of corruption, Job did not cast away, but still held fast, and such trust has great recompense of reward, Heb. 10. 35. We may be assured that none shall lose by seeking him. There is a recompense in the next world, if not in this.

We may lose much *for* the Lord, but we shall not lose anything *by* him. However the godly man may be tried, he shall come forth purified as gold from the furnace. Whether the Lord gives us health and temporal blessings or not, if we patiently suffer according to his will, in the end we shall be happy. Job's acquaintance, neighbours, and relations, were

very kind to him. They wept for his griefs, and rejoiced in his joys, and proved not such miserable comforters as his three friends. Every one gave him according to their ability. Job prayed for his friends, and then others came, desiring an interest in his prayers. The more we pray for our friends and relations, the more comfort we may expect in them.

His estate increased, by the blessing of God upon the little that his friends gave him. The blessing of the Lord makes rich; it is he that gives us power to get wealth, and gives success in honest endeavours. That blessing can make very rich, and sometimes makes good people so. Those that are become rich by getting, often think they can make themselves very rich by saving; but as those that have little, must depend on God to make it much, so those that have much must depend on God to make it more; else ye have sown much, and bring in little, Hag. 1. 6.

The last days of a good man sometimes prove his best, his last works his best works, his last comforts his best comforts; for his path, like that of the morning-light, shines more and more to the perfect day. Of a wicked man it is said, His last state is worse than his first, Luke 11. 26; but of the upright man, His end is peace. Job, in his affliction, had wished to be as in months past, as rich as he had been, and quite despaired of that; but God is often better to us than our fears, nay, than our wishes; Job's possessions were doubled.

His family was built up again, and he had great comfort in his children. The last of his afflictions that are recorded, ch. 1, and the most grievous, was, the death of all his children at once: his friends upbraided him with it, ch. 8. 4, but God repaired even that. The number of his children was the same as before: some say his children that were dead, were not lost, but gone before to a better world; and therefore if he have but the same number of them, they may be reckoned as doubled. Whether our children and friends go before or follow after us to the eternal world, they will not be lost to us if the Lord hath made them partakers of his grace—this is infinitely more valuable than all the wealth and personal accomplishments in the world. The names of Job's daughters seemed designed to perpetuate the remembrance of God's great goodness to him.

His life was long: What age he was, when his troubles came, we are no where

told, but here we are told he lived 140 years. He lived to see his posterity to the fourth generation. He died full of days, satisfied with living in this world, and willing to leave it; not peevishly so, as in the days of his affliction, but piously so. Thus, as Eliphaz encouraged him to hope, he came to his grave like a shock of corn in his season.

Job's trials and their happy event afford instruction and consolation to the afflicted, tempted believer; but we shall be more edified and encouraged by looking to our Lord Jesus Christ. His abasement, temptations, and sufferings, were far greater than those of Job; he endured with far more perfect patience, and they issued more gloriously. For us, he was tempted, suffered, and triumphed. For us, when we were enemies, he offered himself a sacrifice, and now pleads for us before the throne. In him believers are pardoned and accepted. He sees his seed, and prolongs his days; and the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hands—but there is no salvation in any other. To Him we must come, in Him we must confide, to Him we must submit, and from Him receive all that we can want. But we can give him nothing except the honour of our whole salvation, and ourselves to be, by his grace, his redeemed and devoted servants. May we then experience his grace, share his victories, tread in his steps, and copy his patience. We shall find in the event, that the Lord is pitiful and of tender mercy. But we shall have need of patience, that having done the will of God, we may receive the promise.

Afflicted and tempted believers, be encouraged. Learn from this history with what meekness and submission you should bear your trials. Wait, trust, and rejoice, and you shall not be disappointed. In the mean time let the prospect of the kingdom prepared for you, enliven and animate your souls. But also, careless sinners should be warned of approaching destruction. Though you may not be tempted, it is not probable you can avoid afflictions, and when your enjoyments are taken from you, have you any principles from which you can derive support and comfort? How terrible the case—to suffer both here and hereafter! Be alarmed for your danger. Repent and believe the gospel.—(60.)

14. *Jemima*, literally, Days upon days. *Ket-zia* or *Kozia*, is Cassia the famous aromatic plant. *Kerenhappuc*, the inverted or flowing horn, the horn of plenty.—*Good*.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

We now enter upon a portion of the sacred scriptures, which in every age has peculiarly edified and delighted the people of God. This book is entitled in the Hebrew, *The Book of Hymns or Praises*, because the greater part of them treat of the praises of God; the remainder consist either of the complaints of an afflicted soul, or of penitential effusions, or of the prayers of a heart overwhelmed with grief. David was the penman of most of the psalms, but there are some that evidently were composed by other writers, and some which are doubtful. But they were all written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and no part of the Old Testament is more frequently quoted or referred to in the New.

The Book of Psalms presents every variety of Hebrew poetry, and they may all be considered as adapted to music. At what time and by whom they were collected into one volume, we have no certain information. Many are of opinion that David collected such as were extant in his time into a book for the use of the national worship, which is not unlikely. But this, as well as the collection by Hezekiah, 2 Chr. 29. 25—30, could not contain any that were composed during the captivity and subsequent thereto. In the latter there are many Chaldee words, and most probably the different collections were formed into one volume by Ezra, when the Jewish canon of scripture was completed.

All the ancient fathers said much in praise of the Psalms. Athanasius called them an epitome of the whole scriptures. Basil, a compendium of all theology. The Reformers valued them highly. Luther said the psalter was a little Bible. Hooker says, "What is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms cannot teach?" In the language of this Divine book the prayers and praises of the church have been offered up at the throne of grace from age to age. It appears to have been the manual of the Son of God. He, who had not the Spirit by measure, in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who spake as never man spake, yet chose to conclude his life, to solace himself in his greatest agony, and at last to breathe out his soul, in the psalmist's words rather than his own.

The following beautiful view of the scope of the Psalms, is prefixed to it in the Reformer's Bible.

"This Book of Psalms is set forth unto us by the Holy Ghost, to be esteemed as a most precious treasure; wherein all things are contained that appertain to true felicity, as well in this life present, as in the life to come: for the riches of true knowledge and heavenly wisdom are set open for us, to take thereof most abundantly. If we would know the great and high Majesty of God, here we may see the brightness thereof shine most clearly. If we would seek his incomprehensible wisdom, here is the school of the same profession. If we would comprehend his inestimable bounty, and approach near thereunto, and fill our hands with that treasure, here we may have a most lively and most comfortable taste thereof. If we would know wherein standeth our salvation, and how to attain to life everlasting, here is Christ, our only Redeemer and Mediator, most evidently described. The rich man may learn the true use of riches; the poor man may find full contentment. He that will rejoice shall know the true joy, and how to keep measure therein. They that are afflicted and oppressed, shall see wherein standeth their comfort, and how they ought to praise God when he sendeth them deliverance. The wicked, and the persecutors of the children of God, shall see how the hand of God is ever against them; and though he suffer them to prosper for a while, yet he bridleth them, inasmuch, that they cannot touch a hair of one's head, except he permit them; and how in the end their destruction is most miserable. Briefly, here we may have present remedies against all temptations, and troubles of mind and conscience; so that being well practised herein, we may be assured against all dangers in this life, live in the true fear and love of God, and at length attain to that incorruptible crown of glory, which is laid up for all them that love the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Psalms especially looked forward to the coming of the promised Messiah. Many of them were evidently prophetic of Him. Harsley observes to the following effect; "Of those which relate to the history of the natural Israel, there are few in which the fortunes of the mystical Israel are not shadowed forth; and of those which allude to the life of David, there are none in which the Son of David is not the principal subject. David's complaints are Messiah's complaints. David's afflictions are Messiah's sufferings. David's penitential supplications are Messiah's, under the burden of the imputed guilt of man. David's songs of triumph and thanksgiving are Messiah's, for his victory over sin and death, and hell. In a word, there is not a page of the book of Psalms in which the pious reader will not find his Saviour, if he reads with a view of finding Him."

All pious minds will allow that every psalm either points to Christ, immediately, in his person, his character, and offices; or may be so applied as to lead the believer's thoughts to Him. And it cannot be doubted but that the psalms are the language of the believer's heart, under its various exercises, whether mourning for sin, thirsting after God, or rejoicing in Him. Whether burdened with affliction, struggling with temptation, or triumphing in the hope or enjoyment of deliverance—whether admiring the Divine perfections, thanking God for his mercies, meditating on his truths, or delighting in his service—they form a Divinely appointed standard of genuine experience, by which we may judge ourselves, as is already remarked. Their value in this view is inestimable, and the use of them will generally increase with the growth of the power of true religion in the heart. The psalmist's expressions are of great use; and by them the Spirit helps our praying infirmities. If we make the psalms familiar to us, as we ought to do, whatever errand we have at the throne of grace, by way of confession, petition, or thanksgiving, we may be assisted from thence; whatever devout affection is working in us, holy desire or hope, sorrow or joy, we may there find words wherewith to clothe it; sound speech which cannot be condemned. In the language of this Divine book, the prayers and praises of the church have been offered up to the throne of grace from age to age.

CHRONOLOGICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE PSALMS.

The following Table has been compiled from Townsend, compared with Calmet and others, and contains the most generally received opinions respecting the writers, occasions, and dates of the Psalms.

Date.	Number.	Writer.	Probable Occasion.	Connexion.	
A.M. B.C.					
2473	1531	88.	Heiman	Affliction of Israel in Egypt	Exod.2.23—25.
2514	1490	90.	Moses	Shortening of man's life	Numb. 14. 45.
2941	1063	9.	David	Victory over Goliath	1 Sam. 17. 4.
2942	1062	11.		Advised to flee to the mountains	19.
	59.			Saul's soldiers surrounding his house.	—11-17.
	56.			With the Philistines at Gath	21.
	34.			Leaving the city of Gath	—
	142.			In the cave of Adullam	22. 1.
	17.			Priests murdered by Doeg	—17-19.
	52. 109. 85. 140.			Persecution by Doeg	—
2943	1061	64. 31.		Persecution by Saul	23. 12.
	54.			Treachery of the Ziphites	—19.
	57. 58.			Refusal to kill Saul	24. 22.
	63.			In the wilderness of Engedi	—
2946	1059	141.		Driven out of Judea	27. 1.
2956	1048	139.		King of Israel	1 Chron. 12. 40.
2962	1042	68.		First removal of the ark	2 Sam. 6. 11.
	24. 132. 105. 96. 106.			Second removal of the ark	1 Chron. 15. & 16.
	2. 45. 22. 16. 118. 110.			Nathan's prophetic address	—17.
2964	1010	60. 108.		Conquest of Syria and Edom by Joab	—18. 13.
2968	1036	20. 21.		War with the Ammonites and Syrians	2 Sam. 10.
	{ 6. 51. 32. 38. 39. }				
2970	1034	{ 40. 41. 103. }		Adultery, and murder of Uriah	—12. 13.
2983	1021	3. 7.		Flight from Absalom	—15. & 16.
	{ 42. 43. 55. 4. 5. 62. }			Near Jordan, in the flight from Absalom	—17.
	{ 143. 144. 70. 71. }				
2986	1018	18.		Conclusion of his wars	—22. 1-51.
2987	1017	30.		Dedication of Araunah's threshing floor	1 Chron. 21.
2989	1015	91.		After his advice to Solomon	—28. 10.
	72.			Coronation of Solomon	—29. 19.
	145.			A review of his past life.	—
	{ 8. 12. 19. 23. 26. 27. }				
	{ 28. 29. 33. 61. 65. }				
	{ 69. 86. 95. 101. }				
	{ 104. 120. 121. 122. }				
	{ 121. 131. 133. }				
3000	1004	47. 97. 98. 99. 100.	Solomon	Removal of the ark into the temple	2 Chron. 5. 7. 13.
	135. 136.			Dedication of the temple	—6. 3.
3074	930	78.	Asaph	Asa's victory over Israel	—16. 6.
3108	896	82. 115. 46.	{ Asaph } { & others }	The reign of Jehoshaphat	—20. 26.
3294	710	44.	H Ezekiah	The blasphemy of Rab-shakeh	2 Kings 19.
	73. 75. 76.		Asaph	Destruction of Sennacherib's army	—19.
3416	589	74. 79. 83. 94.		Burning of the temple at Jerusalem	Jer. 39. 10.
	137. 130. 80. 77.		Asaph,		
3463	541	37. 67. 49. 53. 50.	Ethan,		
to	to	10. 13. 14. 15. 25.	and		
3465	539	86. 89. 92. 93. 123.	others...	During the Babylonian captivity	Dan. 7.
3466	538	102.	Daniel	Near the close of the captivity	—9. 27.
	126. 85.		{ Sons of }	The decree of Cyrus for restoring	Ezra 1.
			{ Korah }	the Jews	
	{ 107. 87. 111. 112. }				
	{ 113. 114. 116. 117. }		Various	The return of the Jews from captivity	—3. 7.
	{ 125. 127. 128. 134. }				
3469	535	94. 66	{ Sons of }	Foundation of the second temple	—13.
	129.		{ Korah }		
3470	534		{ Ezra or }	Opposition of the Samaritans	—4. 24.
			{ Nehem }		
3485	519	138.	{ Haggai }	Rebuilding of the temple	—6. 13.
			{ or Zech }		
3489	515	{ 48. 81. 146. 147. }	Various	Dedication of the second temple	Zech. 8. 23.
		{ 148. 149. 150. }			
3560	444	1. 119.	{ Ezra. Some think David. }	Manual of devotion	Neh. 13. 3.

The following explanatory remarks are chiefly from *T. H. Horne*.

To most of the psalms are prefixed inscriptions or titles, concerning the import of which expositors and interpreters are by no means agreed; nor is there authority to affirm that all the titles are canonical. Some, undoubtedly, are not of equal antiquity with the text, being probably conjectural additions; yet we have no reason to suppose that many of them are not canonical parts of the psalms. Some of them are perfectly similar to the eastern manner of giving titles to books and poems, and have reference, by way of allusion, to the subjects. Thus, Ps. 22. 56. 60. 80. 45. Fifteen psalms, 120. to 134. are called Songs of degrees, or, literally, Songs of the steps. They are supposed to have derived their name from being sung when the people came up to worship in Jerusalem at the annual festivals, or perhaps from the Babylonish captivity. To some (106. 111. 112. 113. 135. 146. to 150.) the title *Hallelujah* is prefixed, which in the English version is rendered, Praise the Lord, as a part of the first verse. *Maschil*, prefixed to some, is supposed to denote that those psalms were peculiarly adapted to give instruction.

Michtam, golden, a golden song of David; a precious, golden composition. Some have supposed that the psalms to which this is prefixed, may have been written in golden letters. It has also been considered to denote a musical instrument.

Other titles are considered as names of musical instruments, or of tunes. These are as follow.

Neginoth, stringed instruments, to be played on by the fingers.

Nechiloth, wind instruments, but whether of the organ or flute kind cannot now be determined.

Sheminith is supposed to have been a harp of eight strings.

Shiggaion is supposed to signify a song of consolation, or an elegy.

Gittith, a musical instrument brought from Gath, or that those psalms were sung at the vintage.

Muthlabben, Ps. 9. Some manuscripts read *almuth*, signifying it was sung by a chorus of virgins.

Mahalah denotes a dance, such as was used on some festivals and solemn occasions. *Mahalah-leannoth* means a responsive psalm of that description.

Selah. Respecting this word there are many different opinions. It is generally supposed to be both a musical note, and a note of emphasis in the sense, by which we are called to observe something remarkable. In the Greek version it is rendered by *diapsalma*, which signifies a rest or pause, or a change of the modulation.

Higgaion signifies meditation.

Psalms 25. 34. 37. 111. 112. 145. are written in a peculiar manner, the verses in the original beginning with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in regular succession, with some slight variations. In psalm 119 each verse of each part, in the original, begins with the same letter of the alphabet.

There are some variations between the Hebrew, and the Greek and Latin vulgate versions; those in the numbers principally arise from Psalms 9 and 10 in the Hebrew being put together as one; consequently those that follow differ from the Hebrew numbers. This makes a difference in the numbers as to quotations from those versions, or such modern translations as follow them. A short table will show the difference.

Heb. Ps. 1 to 8 are, in Gr. and Lat. 1 to 8.	Heb. Ps. 116 in Gr. and Lat. 114 and 115.
— 9 and 10. 9	— 117 to 146. 116 to 145.
— 11 to 113. 10 to 112.	— 147 146 and 147.
— 114 and 115. 113	— 148 to 150. 143 to 150.

The psalms in the book of Common Prayer are from the early English version of the scriptures by Tindal and Coverdale, revised by Cramer. This is founded on the Greek and Latin versions, corrected, however, in many places by the Hebrew. The differences in these two English translations are thus accounted for; in very few instances are they more than verbal.

In the Greek version is added a short psalm of eight verses on the subject of the combat between David and Goliath; but it is evidently spurious, and has never been admitted by any authorities in the christian church, though it is certainly a very ancient compilation, and the expressions used may be found in other passages of scripture.

The number of the Psalms is one hundred and fifty, and they have been classed under six heads.

I. Prayers—

1. For pardon of sin, 6. 25. 38. 51. 130. Those called penitential are, 6. 32. 38. 51. 102. 130. 143.
2. When prevented attending public worship, 42. 43. 63. 84.
3. In affliction, 3. 13. 16. 22. 31. 54. 56. 57. 61. 69. 71. 77. 86. 88. 143.
4. In trouble and persecution, 4. 5. 11. 28. 41. 44. 55. 59. 60. 64. 70. 74. 79. 80. 83. 89. 94. 102. 109. 120. 122. 137. 140. 141. 142.

II. Thanksgiving Psalms—

1. For personal mercies, 9. 18. 22. 30. 34. 40. 75. 103. 108. 116. 118. 138. 144. 145.
2. For mercies to the church, 46. 48. 65. 66. 68. 76. 81. 85. 98. 105. 116. 117. 124. 126. 129. 135. 136. 149.

III. Psalms of adoration—

- Of the majesty, glory, and perfections of God, 8. 19. 24. 29. 33. 47. 50. 65. 66. 76. 77. 89. 93. 96. 97. 99. 104. 111. 113. 114. 115. 134. 139. 147. 148. 150.
- Of the providential care of God over good men, 20. 23. 34. 36. 62. 91. 100. 103. 107. 117. 121. 145. 146.

IV. Psalms of doctrinal instruction—

- The excellency of the scriptures, 19. 119.
- The vanity of man as mortal, 39. 49. 90.
- The characters of good and bad men, 1. 5. 7. 9. 10. 11. 12. 14. 15. 17. 24. 25. 32. 34. 36. 37. 50. 52. 53. 58. 72. 73. 75. 84. 91. 92. 94. 101. 112. 119. 121. 125. 127. 128. 131. 132. 133.

V. Prophetical Psalms—relating especially to Jesus Christ, or Messiah—

2. 8. 16. 22. 40. 45. 69. 72. 87. 107. 110. 118.

VI. Historical Psalms—

78. 105. 106. 135. 136.

About fifty Psalms are either quoted or referred to in the New Testament.

PSALM I.

This is a psalm of instruction concerning good and evil. The different character and condition of those that serve God and those that serve him not, is here plainly stated; so that every man, if faithful to himself, may here examine his own character. The division of the children of men into saints and sinners, righteous and unrighteous, the children of God and the children of the wicked one, is ancient, ever since the struggle began between sin and grace, the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; it is lasting, and will survive all other divisions and subdivisions of men; for by this, men's everlasting state will be determined. This psalm shows us, (1.) The holiness and happiness of a godly man, ver. 1—3. (2.) The sinfulness and misery of a wicked man, ver. 4, 5. The ground and reason of both, ver. 6.

Ver. 1—3. All men shun misery, and aim to be happy; but few understand that misery springs from sin, and that happiness can only be enjoyed in the favour of God. This the scriptures declare, and by their light the believer seeks and finds it.

Here is a description given of the godly man's spirit and way. The Lord knows them that are his by name; but we must know them by their character. The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chooses to walk by. A godly man utterly renounces the conduct of evil doers, and will not be led by them, ver. 1. He sees evil doers round about him; the world is full of them. They are *ungodly* first, casting off the fear of God, and living in neglect of duty to him; but they rest not there: when the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be *sinners*, they break out into open rebellion against God, and engage in the service of sin and Satan; then the heart is hardened, that they come to be *scorners*; they openly scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down hill; the bad grow worse. The word translated *ungodly*, signifies such as are unsettled, and walk by no certain rule, but are at the command of every lust, and at the beck of every temptation. The word for *sinners* signifies such as are determined for the practice of sin. The *scornful* are those that defy all that is sacred.

These the good man sees with a sad heart;

they are vexation to his righteous soul. But he shuns them; if they are ungodly, they shall not be the men of his counsel. He does not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to their advice. He avoids doing as they do; their way shall not be his way; he will not come into it, much less will he continue in it. He avoids as much as he can being where they are; he will not choose them for his companions. He keeps far from them, for fear of contagion, Prov. 4. 14, 15. He that would be kept from harm, must keep out of harm's way. He does not repose himself with these that sit down secure in their wickedness. The seat of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful, 69. 12. Happy is the man that never sits in it, Hos. 7. 5.

A godly man submits to the direction of the word of God, ver. 2. This keeps him out of the way of the ungodly, and fortifies him against their temptations. We may judge of our spiritual state by asking, What is the law of God to us? A good man delights in it, though it be a law, a yoke, because it is the law of God, which is holy, just, and good. All who are well pleased that there is a God, must be well pleased that there is a bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and of the only way to happiness in him. To meditate in God's word, is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with close application of mind, and fixedness of thought. We must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God, as the rule of our actions, and the spring of our comforts; and have it in our thoughts accordingly, night and day. No time is amiss. We must not only meditate on God's word morning and evening, but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day, and with the repose and slumbers of every night; When I awake, I am still with thee.

Here is an assurance given of the godly man's happiness, with which we should encourage ourselves. God blesses him, and that blessing will make him happy. When the psalmist describes a blessed man, he describes a good man. That man is *happy*, who keeps in the way of duty.

He shall be like a tree, fruitful and flourishing, ver. 3. The more we converse with the word of God, the better furnished we are for every good word and work. The Divine blessing produces real

effects. It is the happiness of a godly man, 1. He is planted by the grace of God. Never any good tree grew of itself; it is the planting of the Lord, and therefore he must in it be glorified. 2. He keeps close to the means of grace; here called the rivers of water, those rivers which make glad the city of our God, 46. 4; from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigour. 3. His practices shall abound to a good account, Phil. 4. 17. Those who enjoy the mercies of grace, both in the temper of their minds, and in the tenour of their lives, should bring forth fruit in due season—improving every opportunity of doing good in its proper time. 4. His profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay; His leaf also shall not wither. Even the leaf of those who bring forth only the leaves of profession, without any good fruit, will wither; but if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and to our credit. 5. Prosperity shall attend him; soul prosperity. Whatever he does, in conformity to the law, it shall prosper and succeed, to his mind, or above his hope.

In the measure that a man is godly and blessed, he makes the word of God, which holds forth the way of reconciliation with God, through Christ, the matter of his chief delight and contentment, and he shall be fixed and furnished with the influence of grace from Christ, for the support of spiritual life.—(19.)

The variety of expressions here used by the psalmist intimates that there is a gradation in wickedness, and improvement and advancement in holiness. It is impossible for any one who forsakes the right path to say whither he shall wander. Few, when they begin to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, propose to sit down finally in the seat of the scornful. O thou second Adam, who alone, since the transgression of the first, hast attained a sinless perfection, make thy servants *blessed* by making them *righteous*, through thy merits and grace!—(32.)

Ver. 4—6. Here is the description of the ungodly given. They are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition. The ungodly, they are *not so*, ver. 4; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they

bring forth no fruit but what is evil. The righteous are like useful, fruitful trees; the ungodly are like the chaff which the wind drives away; the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the floor desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. They are like chaff, of no worth in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. They have no solidity; they are easily driven to and fro by every wind of temptation, and have no steadfastness. The wrath of God will drive them away. The chaff may be, for a while, among the wheat; but He is coming, whose fan is in his hand, and who will thoroughly purge his floor. They that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff, will be found so, before the whirlwind and fire of Divine wrath, 35. 5; unable to stand before it, or to escape it, Isa. 17. 13.

The doom of the ungodly is fixed. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work shall be truly and perfectly discovered, and every man's future state will be determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment; they may hope to come off, but their hope will deceive them. They will be for ever shut out from the society of the blessed. The wicked shall not have a place in that congregation. They shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves thrust out, Luke 13. 28. The wicked and profane, in this world ridicule the righteous, despise them, and care not for their company; justly, therefore, will they be for ever separated from them. Hypocrites, in this world, may remain undiscovered; but Christ cannot be imposed upon, though his ministers may; the day is coming when he will separate between the tares and the wheat: see Matt. 13. 41, 49.

The reason is rendered of this different state of the godly and wicked. God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed, because the Lord knows their way; he chose them into it, inclined them to choose it, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps. Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. The ungodly perish, because the way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk leads directly to destruction, and therefore must necessarily end

in it. Let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts, Jer. 12. 3, knows their secret devotions, Matt. 6. 6, knows their character, how much soever it is blemished by the reproaches of men, and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world, to their immortal joy and honour. Let this damp the security of sinners, that their way, though pleasant now, will perish at last.

Blessed be God for the covenant of grace, and Jesus the Mediator of it. By his perfect obedience, even unto death, he is become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Whenever the sinner becomes sensible of his guilt and misery, by Christ the living way, he may be admitted into the company of the righteous. Perceiving the vanity of the world, and the hatefulness of sin, he begins to delight in the word of God, which shows him the preciousness of Christ, and the beauty of holiness. Reading and meditating daily upon the sacred scriptures, he becomes in Christ a new creature. He has new desires, new pleasures, hopes, fears, sorrows, companions, and employments. His thoughts, words, and actions are changed. He enters upon a new state, and bears a new character. Behold all things are become new. His religion will not consist in forms and notions; he will bring forth the fruits of righteousness, for he is planted, and takes root in a good soil; through the word, he derives from Christ communications of Divine grace, which gradually transform his soul into the image of the Redeemer. How different the character, prospect, and end of the ungodly!

PSALM II.

The ancient Jewish doctors interpreted this psalm of the Messiah, and some of the modern ones own that it may be understood either of David or of the Messiah, and that some things are clearer of the Messiah than of David; and some particular passages are applied to the Messiah, both by ancient and later writers among the Jews.—(27.) See also *Hales*. There is nothing in it but what is applicable to Christ, but some things that are not at all applicable to David. It is interpreted of Christ, Acts 4. 25—27; 13. 33; Heb. 1. 5. We have here, 1. Threatenings against the adversaries of

Christ's kingdom, ver. 1—6. 2. Promises to Christ himself the Head of this kingdom, ver. 7—9. 3. Counsel to all, to espouse its interests, ver. 10—12.

Ver. 1—6. Observe here the mighty opposition that would be given to the Messiah and his kingdom, to his holy religion and all the interests of it. So great a blessing to this world, should have been universally welcomed and embraced; but never were any notions, though ever so absurd, nor any powers, though ever so tyrannical, opposed with so much violence as the doctrine and government of Christ.

We are here told who would appear as adversaries to Christ. As this apostate world is in fact the kingdom of Satan, unconverted men, of every rank, party, and character, are excited by him to agree in opposing the cause of God and the kingdom of Christ. But the rulers of the earth generally have been most active in this opposition. The truths and precepts of christianity are contrary to their ambitious projects and worldly lusts.

They quarrel with, and muster their forces against the Lord, and against his Anointed, against all religion in general, and the christian religion in particular. All who are enemies to Christ, are enemies to God himself; they have hated both me and my Father, John 15. 24. The great Author of our holy religion is here called the Lord's Anointed, or Messiah; or Christ, in allusion to the anointing of David to be king: he is both authorized and qualified to be the Head and King of the church.

The opposition they give, is here described; it is a most spiteful and malicious opposition. They that did evil, raged at the light. It is a deliberate and politic opposition. They imagine, or meditate; they contrive means to suppress Christ's kingdom, and are very confident of the success of their contrivances. It is a resolute and obstinate opposition. They set themselves, in defiance of reason and conscience, and all the terrors of the Lord. It is a combined and confederate opposition. They take counsel together, to assist and animate one another in this opposition against the Messiah. All their abilities are employed to find out ways and means for preventing the establishment of Christ's kingdom, 83. 5.

We are here told what they aim at in this opposition, ver. 3; Let us break their

bands asunder. They cannot endure the yoke of the Lord, and his Anointed. Christ has bands and cords for us; they that will be saved by him, must be ruled by him; but they are cords of a man, agreeable to right reason, and bands of love, conducive to our true interest. Why do men oppose religion, but because they are impatient of its restraints and obligations? They would break asunder the bands of conscience, and the cords of God's commandments; they will not receive, but cast them away as far as they can.

Corrupt affections are the most inveterate enemies of Christ; and their language is, We will not have this man to reign over us. Doctrines would readily be believed if they involved in them no precepts; and the church may be tolerated by the world if she will only give up her discipline.—(32.)

The enemies are here reasoned with. They can show no good cause for opposing so just, holy, and gracious a government, which interferes not with the secular powers, nor introduces dangerous principles; but, on the contrary, if universally received, would bring a heaven upon earth. They can hope for no success in opposing so powerful a kingdom. When they have done their worst, Christ will have a church in the world, and that church shall be glorious and triumphant; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Observe also the mighty conquest gained over all this threatening opposition. If heaven and earth be the combatants, it is easy to foretell which will be the conqueror, ver. 4. The perfect repose of the eternal mind may be our comfort under all the disquietudes of our mind.*

Christ's enemies are fools. God has them, and all their attempts, in derision. Those attempts of the kingdom of Satan, which in our eyes are formidable, in his are despicable. They are justly punished, ver. 5. Though God despises them as impotent, yet he will make the most daring sinners to know that their sin is a provocation to him; he is justly and sorely displeased. We cannot expect that God should be reconciled to us, or well-pleased in us, but in and through the Anointed; and therefore, if we reject him, we sin against the remedy. God puts them into a consternation, as the word is; his setting up this kingdom of his Son, is the greatest vexation to them that can be.

They and all their counsels are certainly defeated, ver. 6. David was advanced to the throne, and became master of Zion. The Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, has all power both in heaven and in earth, and is head over all things to the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of his enemies to hinder his advancement. Jesus Christ is sovereign in the kingdom both of providence and grace. Being called to this honour, he was confirmed in it. He is set upon Zion, the hill of God's holiness, a type of the gospel church. Christ's throne is set up in his church, that is, in the hearts of all believers.

Ver. 7—9. The kingdom of the Messiah is founded upon a decree, an eternal decree of God the Father. It was the result of the counsels of the Divine wisdom, and the determinations of the Divine will, before all worlds, neither of which can be altered. The precept or statute, so some read it; the covenant or compact, so others; the federal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning man's redemption, represented by the covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, 89. 3. This our Lord Jesus often referred to, as that which he governed himself by; This is the will of him that sent me, John 6. 40. This commandment have I received of my Father, John 10. 18; 14. 31.

There is a declaration of that decree, for the satisfaction of all who are commanded to yield themselves subjects to this King; and to leave those inexcusable, who will not have him to reign over them. The decree was secret, it was what the Father said to the Son, when he possessed him in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; but it is declared by the Faithful Witness, who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and came into the world as the Prophet of the church, to declare him, John 1. 18.

Christ here declares a two-fold title to his kingdom.

A title by inheritance, ver. 7. This scripture the apostle quotes, Heb. 1. 4, 5. He is the Son of God, not by adoption, but his begotten Son, the only begotten of the Father, John 1. 14. He is the Son of God, and therefore of the same nature with the Father, has in him all the fulness of the Godhead, infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. The supreme government of the church none can be fit for but

He who is one with the Father, and was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, thoroughly apprized of all his counsels, Prov. 8. 30. He is the Son of God, and therefore dear to him; his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. Upon this account we are to receive him as a king; for because the Father loveth the Son, he hath given all things into his hand, John 3. 35; 5. 20. Being a Son, he is heir of all things; the Father having made the worlds by him, by Him also he governs them; for He is the eternal Wisdom, and the eternal Word. If God hath said unto him, "Thou art my Son," it becomes each of us to say to him, Thou art my Lord, my Sovereign.

This day have I begotten thee refers to his eternal generation. It is quoted, Heb. 1. 5, to prove that he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, ver. 3, and it refers to the demonstration given of it by his resurrection from the dead, Acts 13. 33; It was by the resurrection from the dead, that sign which was to be the most convincing of all, that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Rom. 1. 4. Christ is said to be the first-begotten and first-born from the dead, Rev. 1. 5; Col. 1. 18. Immediately after his resurrection, he entered upon the administration of his mediatorial kingdom; it was then he said, All power is given unto me; to that especially he had regard, when he taught his disciples to pray, Thy kingdom come.

It is also a title by agreement, v. 8, 9. The agreement is this; the Son must undertake the office of an Intercessor, and, upon that condition, he shall have the honour and power of a universal monarch: see Isa. 53. 12; Zech. 6. 13.

The Son must ask. He put himself voluntarily into a state of inferiority to the Father, by taking upon him the human nature; for, as God, he was equal in power and glory with the Father, and had nothing to ask. It supposes the making of a satisfaction, by the virtue of which, the intercession must be made; and the paying of a price, on which this large demand was to be grounded: see John 17. 4, 5. The Son, in asking the heathen for his inheritance, aims, not only at his own honour, but at their happiness in him; so that he intercedes for them, ever lives to do so, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

The Father will grant even to the king-

dom itself. It is here promised that Christ's government shall be universal; not over the Jews only, to whose nation the church had been long confined, but the Gentiles also. Those in the uttermost parts of the earth shall be his possession, and he shall have multitudes of willing loyal subjects among them. Christians are the possession of the Lord Jesus; they are to him for a name and a praise. God the Father gives them to him, when by his Spirit and grace he works upon them to submit to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. The decree of the Father hath taken effect in part; the kingdom of the Mediator is fixed on the ruins of Jewish and heathen opposers, and it shall at length universally prevail, while every enemy shall be dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel. He has a rod of iron to crush them that will not submit to his authority, ver. 9.

Ver. 10—12. We have here the practical application of this gospel doctrine, concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, by way of exhortation. Kings and judges stand upon a level with common persons before God; and it is as necessary for them to be religious as for any others, ver. 10. What is said to them, is said to all, and is required of every one of us. We are exhorted to reverence God, and to stand in awe of him, ver. 11. He is our Lord and Master, and we are bound to serve him; our Friend and Benefactor, and we have reason to rejoice in him. We must serve God in all ordinances of worship, and all instances of a godly conversation, but with a holy fear, a jealousy over ourselves, and a reverence of him. We must rejoice in God; but our salvation must be wrought out with fear and trembling, Phil. 2. 12. Whatever we rejoice in, in this world, it must always be with trembling, lest we be puffed up with the things we rejoice in, and because of the uncertainty of them, and the damp which a thousand accidents may soon cast upon our joy, 1 Cor. 7. 30.

Also to welcome Jesus Christ, and to submit to him. This is our wisdom and interest. Christ is called the Son, because so he was declared, and he is to be adored by us. He is the Son of man, the Mediator, John 5. 27, and, upon that account, to be received and submitted to; he is called the Son, to include both, as God is often called emphatically the Father, because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in

him our Father. Our duty to Christ is here expressed figuratively, Kiss the Son, ver. 12: not as Judas, and as all hypocrites; but with a believing kiss. Let us study how to do honour to the Lord Jesus, and to give unto him the glory due unto his name. He is thy Lord, and worship thou him, 45. 11. Let him be very dear and precious to you; love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as she did, to whom much was forgiven, and, in token of it, kissed his feet, Luke 7. 38. And with a kiss of allegiance and loyalty take this yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his interest. The reasons to enforce this command are taken from our own interest, which God, in his gospel, shows a concern for. Consider, if we refuse and reject Christ, it is at our peril.

If the Son be angry, who shall intercede for us? There remains no more sacrifice, no other name, by which we can be saved. Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. It will be utter destruction to yourselves; lest ye perish from the way, or in the way, so some. *In the way of your sins, and from the way of your vain hopes; lest your way perish, lest you prove to have missed the way to happiness.* Christ is the way; take heed lest ye be cut off from him as your way to God. They were, or, at least, thought themselves in the way; but, by neglecting Christ, they perished from it; this aggravates their ruin, they go to hell from the way to heaven; are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never arrive there.

When his wrath is kindled, woe be to those that despise him; but the psalmist startles at the thought, and blesses those that escape such a doom. Blessed will they be in the day of wrath, who, by trusting in Christ, have made him their Refuge; when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they shall lift up their heads with joy; and when those who now despise Christ and his followers, will be forced to say, to their own confusion, Now we see that blessed are all they, and they only, that trust in him.

For when the glory of man shall fade away, as the short-lived flower of the field, and when all that is called great and honourable in princes, shall be laid low in the dust, He shall give unto his faithful servants a crown without cares, and a kingdom that cannot be moved.—(32.)

12. To kiss, was a rite of adoration and worship, 1 Kings 19. 18; Hos. 13. 2. It is also a mark of homage, in acknowledgment of authority.

PSALM III.

This psalm, by the example of David in distress, shows us the security of the redeemed: how safe they are under the Divine protection. David, being now driven out from his palace, from the royal city, from the holy city, by his rebellious son Absalom, (1.) Complains to God of his enemies, ver. 1, 2. Confides in God, and encourages himself in Him notwithstanding, ver. 3. (2.) Recollects his experience of God's goodness to him. Triumphs over his fears, ver. 6, and over his enemies, ver. 7. Gives God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort of the Divine blessing and salvation which are sure to all the people of God, ver. 8. Those speak best of the truths of God, who speak experimentally; so David here speaks of the power and goodness of God, and of the safety and tranquillity of the godly.

Ver. 1—3. This psalm was composed, or, at least, the substance of it was meditated in David's thoughts, and offered up to God, when he fled from Absalom, 2 Sam. 15, &c. He was in great danger, yet he kept hold of his interest in God. Perils and frights should drive us to God, not drive us from him. The sedateness of his mind was evinced by the Spirit's coming upon him. Let no unkindness, not even of a child or a friend, ever unfit us for communion with God. He was suffering for his sin in the matter of Uriah. Yet he did not therefore cast away his confidence in the Divine power and goodness, nor despair of succour. Our sorrow for sin must not hinder either our joy in God, or our hope in God. He fled from Absalom, and yet, by this psalm, it appears that he was full of true courage arising from his faith in God. True christian fortitude consists more in a gracious security and serenity of mind, in patient bearing, and patient waiting, than in daring enterprises with sword in hand.

David was now at a distance from his own closet, and from the courts of God's house, where he used to pray; and yet he could find a way open to heaven. Wherever we are, we may have access to God, and we may draw nigh to him, whithersoever we are driven.

His enemies were very many; Lord!

how are they increased! As people must not trust too much to princes, 146. 3, so princes must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ, the Son of David, had many enemies, when the crowd cried, Crucify him, Crucify him. How were they then increased, that troubled him!

His enemies were very malicious; they rose up against him, they aimed to trouble him; they said, There is no help for him in God. They put an invidious construction upon his troubles, as Job's friends did upon his.

They blasphemously reflected upon God as unable to relieve him. They endeavoured to shake his confidence in God. This grieved him worst of all, that they had so bad an opinion of him, as to think it possible to take him off from that foundation. A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God. To this complaint he adds, Selah.

The word Selah is nowhere used but in the book of Psalms and in the song of Habakkuk, which makes it probable it was a musical note, directing the singer to lift up his voice, or make a pause. But it is generally placed at some remarkable passage, which gives occasion to think that it served also to quicken the attention or observation of the singer and hearer.—(54.)

An active believer, the more he is beaten off from God, either by the rebukes of Providence, or the reproaches of enemies, the faster hold he will take, and the closer will he cleave to him; so David here cries out with so much the more assurance, But thou, O Lord, art a Shield for me; I am resolved I will never distrust thee. See what God is to his people, what he will be, what they have found him, what David found in him. 1. Safety. Not only my Shield; but a shield for me, which denotes the present advantage of that protection. 2. Honour; Thou art my Glory. Those whom God owns for his, have true honour put upon them. Thou art my Glory, whatever my lot is. 3. Joy and deliverance. If, in the worst of times, God's people can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that all shall work for good to them, they will own God as the Lifter up of their heads, who gives them both cause, and hearts to rejoice.

Ver. 4—8. See with what comfort David looks back upon the communion he

had with God, and the communications of his favour to him. David had been exercised with many difficulties, but still he had found God all-sufficient. He now remembered, with pleasure, that, in all his difficulties and dangers, he had been enabled to acknowledge God, and to lift up his heart to him, and his voice also. Care and grief do us good when they set us praying; and engage us to cry to God, as those that are in earnest. He had always found God ready to answer his prayers; nothing can fix a gulf between the communications of God's grace towards us, and the operations of his grace in us; between his favour and our faith.

He had always been very safe under the Divine protection, ver. 5. This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, which we ought to give thanks for alone, and with our families, every morning. Many lie down, and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night; but we lie down, and sleep in safety, though incapable of doing any thing then for our own preservation. It seems here to be meant of the wonderful calmness of David's spirit, in the midst of his dangers. Having by prayer committed himself and his cause to God, and being sure of his protection, his heart was fixed, and he was easy. The Lord, by his grace and the consolations of his Spirit, powerfully sustained him, and made him easy. It is a great mercy, when we are in trouble, to have our minds stayed upon God, so as never either to eat or sleep with trembling and astonishment.

He who knows that he has God for his protector, may go quietly and confidently to his bed, not fearing the violence of the fire, the edge of the sword, the designs of wicked men, nor the influence of evil spirits.—(11.)

Behold David, in the midst of danger, sleeping without fear; secure, through the Divine protection, of waking to engage and vanquish his enemies. Behold the Son of David composing himself to his rest upon the cross, that bed of sorrows; and commending his spirit into the Father's hands in full confidence of a joyful resurrection, according to the promise, at the time appointed. Behold this, O Christian, and let faith teach thee how to sleep,

and how to die; while it assures thee that as sleep is a short death, so death is only a longer sleep; the same God watches over thee, in thy bed, and in thy grave.—(32.)

It is quite certain that many ancient and reputable writers considered verse 5, as shadowing forth the death and resurrection of Jesus. Of this we may be sure, that it presents a lovely specimen of the sustaining and tranquillizing power of vital religion in the season of overwhelming calamity.—(47.)

God had often broken the power, and restrained the malice of his enemies, ver. 7; had silenced them, and put them to shame. When, at any time, the power of the church's enemies seems threatening, it is good to remember how often God has broken it; and we are sure that his arm is not shortened. Having put himself under God's protection, and often found the benefit of it, his fears were all stilled and silenced, ver. 6.

When David bade Zadok carry back the ark, he spake doubtfully of the issue of his troubles, and concluded, like an humble penitent, Here I am, let him do to me what seemeth him good, 2 Sam. 15. 26. But now, like a strong believer, he has no fear concerning the event. Note; A cheerful resignation to God is the way to obtain a cheerful satisfaction and confidence in God.

His prayers were quickened and encouraged, ver. 7. He believed God was his Saviour, and yet prays; nay, he therefore prays. Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God. Promises of salvation do not supersede, but engage our petitions for it.

His faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies; but concludes it with exultation in the power and grace of his God, and now sees more with him than against him, ver. 8. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; he has power to save, be the danger ever so great. Therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the new covenant, are sure of salvation; for he that is their God, is the God of salvation. His blessing is upon his people; he not only has power to save them, but he has assured them of his kind and gracious intentions toward them. Hence we may conclude, that God's people, though they may lie under the reproaches and censures of men, are surely blessed of him, who blesses indeed, and therefore can command a blessing.

We shall cease to wonder at the troubles of the king of Israel, and almost cease to think of our own little trials, if we duly look unto the Lord Jesus Christ; contrasting his glory and his grace with the contempt and cruelty with which he was treated. Having yielded himself to death, he sanctified the rest of the grave, and became the first fruits of the resurrection. His head was raised above all his enemies; he perfected salvation, purchased all blessings for believers, and opened the kingdom of heaven for them.

PSALM IV.

(1.) David begins with a short prayer, ver. 1. He then directs his speech to the children of men, and, in God's name, reproves them for the dishonour they do to God, and the damage they do to their own souls, ver. 2. He sets before them the happiness of godly people, ver. 3. He calls upon them to consider their ways, ver. 4. He exhorts them to serve God, and trust in him, ver. 5. (2.) He gives an account of his own experience of the grace of God—enabling him to choose God's favour for his happiness, ver. 6,—filling his heart with joy therein, ver. 7. And quieting his spirit in the assurance of the Divine protection, ver. 8.

Ver. 1—5. All the notice God is pleased to take of our prayers, and all the returns he is pleased to make to them, must be ascribed, not to our merit, but to his mercy. Hear me for thy mercy-sake, is our best plea. Two things David here pleads further, 1. Thou who hast by thy grace wrought that good which is in me, hast made me a righteous man; therefore hear me, and so attest thine own work in me. When men condemn us unjustly, this is our comfort, It is God that justifies; he is the God of a believer's righteousness. 2. The experience we have had of God's goodness in enlarging us when we have been in distress, is not only a great encouragement to our faith and hope for the future, but a good plea with God in prayer; For thou art God, and changeest not; thy work is perfect.

He who will not ask such blessings as pardon and justifying righteousness, and eternal life, must perish for the want of them. Alas! that so many should choose an alternative so fearful!—(47.)

God, by the psalmist, here reasons with

sinners to bring them to repentance, ver. 2. You that go on in the neglect of God and his worship, and in contempt of the kingdom of Christ and his government, consider what you do. Those that profane God's holy name, that ridicule his word and ordinances, and, while they profess to know him, in works deny him, do what in them lies, to turn his glory into shame. They that love the world, and seek the things that are beneath, love vanity, and seek lies; as they also do, that please themselves with the delights of sense, and portion themselves with the wealth of this world; for these will deceive, and so ruin them. How long will you do this? Will you never be wise for yourselves, never consider your duty and interest?

See the peculiar favour which God has for good people. the special protection they are under, and the singular privileges to which they are entitled. The Lord has set apart him that is godly, every godly man, for himself; in his eternal choice, in his effectual calling, in the special disposals of his providence, and operations of his grace; they are purified unto him a peculiar people. God knows them that are his, has set his image and superscription upon them. They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels. Know this; let godly people know it, and let them never alienate themselves from Him to whom they are thus appropriated; let wicked people know it, and take heed how they hurt those whom God protects. We should think ourselves happy, if we had the favour of an earthly prince; and is it not worth while, upon any terms, especially such easy ones, to gain the favour of the King of kings? Let us know this, and forsake lying vanities for our own mercies.

The psalmist warns against sin. One good remedy against sin, is, to stand in awe. Keep up a holy reverence of the glory and majesty of God. One good means of preventing sin, and preserving a holy awe, is, to be frequent and serious in communing with our own hearts; Talk with your hearts; you have a great deal to say to them, they may be spoken with, let it not be unsaid. Commune with your hearts; examine them by serious self-reflection, employ them, let your thoughts fasten upon that which is good, and keep close to it. Consider your ways, and observe the directions here given, in order to the doing of this well and to good pur-

pose. Before you turn to sleep at night, examine your consciences with respect to what you have done that day, particularly what you have done amiss, that you may repent of it. When you awake in the night, meditate upon God, and the things that belong to your peace. David himself practised what he here counsels others to do, 63. 6; I remember thee on my bed: upon a sick-bed, particularly, we should consider our ways, and commune with our own hearts about them. Compose yourselves into a serious frame; Be still. When you have asked conscience a question, be silent, wait for an answer.

Open not the mouth to excuse sin.—(18.)

Offer to God the sacrifice of righteousness. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. They that were disaffected to David, would soon return to their allegiance, if they would but worship God aright: and those who know the concerns that lie between them and God, will be glad of the Mediator, the Son of David. It is required here from every one of us, that we serve him. They must be sacrifices of righteousness, all the fruits of the reigning love of God and our neighbour, and all the instances of a religious conversation, which are better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. Also that we confide in him. Serve God without any distrust of him, or any fear of losing by him. Honour him, by trusting in him only, not in your wealth, or in an arm of flesh; trust in his providence, and lean not to your own understanding; trust in his grace, and seek not to establish your own righteousness or sufficiency.

The formal discharge of outward ceremonies will not prove a man to be a true convert; but when the penitent hath, for evidencing the sincerity of his turning to God, brought forth fruit suitable to repentance, he must not lay weight upon his works, but lay all his confidence upon God's free grace, who justifieth the true convert by faith only; therefore, after commanding them to offer the sacrifices of righteousness, he directs them, saying, Put your trust in the Lord.—(18.)

2. Learing is a word of Saxon origin, and signifies falsehood.

4. Stand in awe. The Hebrew word signifies in general a vehement commotion of the mind or heart, whether through grief or anger.—*Pool.*

Ver. 6—8. We have here the foolish wish of worldly people. What good they meant, is intimated, ver. 7. All they de-

sired, was, plenty of the wealth of this world. They inquire, in general, Who will make us happy? but do not apply themselves to God who alone can. They inquire for good that may be seen, and they show no concern for the good things that are out of sight, and are the objects of faith only. We look, with an eye of faith, further than we can see with an eye of sense. They inquire for good, not for the chief good; all they want, is outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, and a good estate; but what are all these worth, without a good God, and a good heart? Any good will serve the turn of most men, but a gracious soul will not be put off so. This way, this wish of carnal worldlings is their folly, and yet many there are that join in it; their doom will be accordingly; "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things, the penny thou didst agree for."

David, and the pious few that adhered to him, dissented from that wish, and joined in this prayer, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. God had set him apart for himself by distinguishing favours, and therefore he sets himself apart by a distinguishing character. The wealth of the world will never make a portion for my soul, and therefore I cannot take up with it. He and his friends agree in their choice of God's favour as their happiness, which, in their account, is better than life and all its comforts.

This they most earnestly desire and seek after; Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Lord, let us have thy favour, and let us know that we have it, we desire no more; that is enough to make us happy. Lord, be at peace with us, accept of us, manifest thyself to us, let us be satisfied of thy loving-kindness, and we will be satisfied with it. Many inquire after happiness, but David had found it. He could ask the Lord to smile on him as a kind father, and to shine on him as a sun. This had often made him happier, than worldly goods could render the ungodly. We should beg God's favour for others as well as for ourselves; in God's favour there is enough for us all, we shall not have the less for others' sharing it.

When God puts grace in the heart, he puts gladness in the heart; nor is any joy comparable to that which gracious souls have in the communications of the Divine

favour. This is gladness in the heart, inward, solid, substantial joy. The mirth of worldly people is but a flash, a shadow; even in laughter their heart is sorrowful, Prov. 14. 13. Thou hast given gladness in my heart; so the word is. True joy is God's gift, not as the world giveth, John 14. 27. Thus comforted, he pitied, but neither envied nor feared the most prosperous sinner; he could lie down and rise up in peace and confidence, assured of temporal protection and eternal salvation.

In that the godly entirely confide, and are always easy. He had laid him down, and slept, and so he will do still. If he have the light of God's countenance, he can enjoy himself. His soul returns to God, and reposes itself in him as its rest, and so he lays him down, and sleeps in peace. He is sure that nothing can come aniss to him. He is very secure, because God himself has undertaken to keep him safe. He commits all his affairs to God, and leaves the issue of them with him. The husbandman having cast his seed into the ground, sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up, he knows not how, Mark 4. 26, 27. So a good man, having by faith and prayer cast his care upon God, sleeps and rests night and day, and is easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him, and is prepared to welcome his holy will.

And as he goes to rest at night in confidence of Divine protection, so he can look forward to the grave, as the bed in which he shall rest till the joyful resurrection morning. But as this salvation is in Christ alone, where will they appear who despise him as their Mediator, and revile him in his disciples? May they stand in awe, and no longer thus sin against their only remedy; may they come to Him and trust in his sacrifice; and offer their sacrifices of righteousness, prayer, thanksgiving, and every good work, which, through him, are to the praise and glory of God.

PSALM V.

This psalm is a solemn address to God at a time when the psalmist was brought into distress. Many such times passed over David; there was scarcely any time of his life, to which this psalm may not be accommodated; for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was continually beset with enemies. His powerful and prevalent appeals to God, when he was so

beset, pointed at Christ's dependence on his Father, and triumphs over the powers of darkness, in the midst of his sufferings. In this psalm, (1.) David promises to pray, assured that God would certainly hear him, ver. 1—3. He gives to God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort of God's holiness, ver. 4—6. (2.) He declares his resolution to keep close to the public worship of God, ver. 7. He prayed for himself, that God would guide him, ver. 8. Against his enemies, that God would destroy them, ver. 9, 10. For all the people of God, that God would give them joy, and keep them safe, ver. 11, 12. This is of great use to direct us in prayer.

Ver. 1—6. God is a prayer-hearing God. Such he has always been, and is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. The most commanding, encouraging principle of prayer, and the most powerful prevailing plea in prayer, is, to look upon him as our king and our God. David's prayers were not his words only, but his meditations. Meditation and prayer should go together. His prayer was a cry, it was the voice of his cry, which denotes fervency of affection, and importunity of expression; such effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much, and do wonders.

The word meditation signifies inward mourning, sighs and groans—the unutterable groanings with which the Spirit of God sometimes makes intercession for the saints, Rom. 8. 26, which are not hid from God, but are well known to him; he understands the language of a sigh or groan.—(27.)

Four things David here promises. 1. That he will pray. The assurances God has given us of his readiness to hear prayer, should confirm our resolution to live and die praying. 2. That he will pray in the morning. Morning-prayer is especially our duty; we are the fittest for prayer, when we are in the most lively and composed frame; clear of the slumbers of the night, revived by them, and not yet filled with the business of the day. We have then most need of prayer, considering the dangers and temptations of the day to which we are exposed, and against which we are concerned, by faith and prayer, to fetch in fresh supplies of grace. Let us not forget Him who arose a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place and there prayed, lest we

should yield to sloth, and admit carnal excuses for our negligence. 3. That he will have his heart intent in the duty; I will direct my prayer, as a marksman directs his arrow; with such a fixedness and steadiness of mind should we address ourselves to God. All our prayers must be directed to God; his honour and glory must be aimed at as our highest end in all our prayers. 4. That he will patiently wait for an answer of peace; I will look up; will look after my prayers, and hear what God the Lord will speak, 85. 8; Hab. 2. 1, that, if he grant what I asked, I may be thankful; if he deny, I may be patient; if he defer, I may continue to pray and wait, and may not faint. We must look up, or look out, as he that has shot an arrow, looks to see how near it has come to the mark. We lose much of the comfort of our prayers, for want of observing the returns of them. In this sacred exercise our affections should be directed to the Lord, and we should look up to him for help, earnestly expecting, and waiting an answer.

David also prays to a sin-hating God. See here the holiness of God's nature. He means, Thou art a God that hateth wickedness, as contrary to thine infinite purity, rectitude, and holy will. God has no pleasure in wickedness, though covered with a cloak of religion. The workers of iniquity are very foolish. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest of all fools; fools of their own making. Wicked people hate God, justly therefore are they hated of him, and it will be their endless misery and ruin.

Let us learn the importance of truth and sincerity, in all the intercourse of life, from ver. 6. How many there are who will meet as friends, and give the right hand of good brotherhood, while they are stabbing in the dark, and whispering something in the ears of friends to lessen their esteem of each other.—(47.)

Liars and murderers are in a particular manner said to resemble the devil, and to be his children, and therefore it may well be expected that God should abhor them. These were the characters of David's enemies; and such as these are still the enemies of Christ and his church.

4. Shall not even sojourn with thee. *A. Clarke.*

Ver. 7—12. David was much in secret worship, prayed often alone, and yet was very constant and devout in his attend-

ance on the sanctuary. The duties of the closet are designed to prepare us for, not excuse us from public ordinances. He resolves to take his encouragement in worship, from God himself only. From his infinite mercy: it is in the inexhaustible treasures of mercy that are in God, and the innumerable proofs and instances thereof, that David confides; not in any merit or righteousness of his own, in his approaches to God. The mercy of God should ever be the foundation both of our hopes and of our joy, in every thing wherein we have to do with him. Also from the instituted way of worship, which was then the temple, here called the temple of his holiness, as a type of Christ, the great and only Mediator, who sanctifies the service, as the temple sanctified the gold, and to whom we must look in all our devotions.

He earnestly prays that God, by his grace, would guide and preserve him always in the way of his duty. See here the good use which David made of the malice of his enemies against him; he was the more cautious to avoid sin and all appearances of it, and the more solicitous to be always found in the good way of God and duty. Thus, by wisdom and grace, good may come out of evil. See the right course which David took for baffling those who sought occasion against him. The way of our duty is here called God's way and his righteousness.

He gives an account of his enemies, and prays against them, ver. 9, 10. Such passages should be read in the future tense, "Thou wilt destroy them," &c.; not as imprecations, but as predictions of the ruin of the impenitent enemies of David and of Christ, as rebels against God. We may not pray against our enemies, but we may foretell the destruction of God's enemies, who will fall by their own counsels, and in the multitude of their iniquities. This is quoted, Rom. 3. 13, to show the general corruption of mankind, for they are all naturally prone to malice, Tit. 3. 3. The grave is opened for them all, and yet they are as open graves to one another. They have by their sins deserved destruction; there is enough to justify God in their utter rejection. Persecuting God's servants fills the measure as soon as any thing, 1 Thess. 2. 15, 16. Nay, that which they do, to secure themselves, and do mischief to others, by the overruling providence of

God may be made a means of their destruction, 7. 15; 9. 15. He pleads, They have rebelled against thee: had they been only mine enemies, I could have forgiven them; but they are rebels against God, and therefore I plainly foresee their ruin. His prayer for their destruction comes not from a spirit of revenge, but from a spirit of prophecy, by which he foretold, That all who rebel against God, will certainly be destroyed by their own counsels.

Observe the description he gives of God's people. This is true and pure religion, to live a life of complacency in God, and dependence on him. Let us learn to pray, not for ourselves only, but for others; for all good people, for all that trust in God, and love his name, though not in every thing of our mind. Let all that are entitled to God's promises, have a share in our prayers; grace be with all that love Christ in sincerity. This is to concur with God. He takes them into his prayers, because they are God's peculiar people. The favour of God is to the saints a defence on every side; like the hedge about Job, round about. While they keep themselves under the Divine protection, they are entirely safe, and ought to be entirely satisfied.

The Divine blessing descends upon us through Jesus Christ, the righteous or just One, as of old it did upon Israel through David, whom, for the benefit of his chosen, God protected, delivered, and placed upon the throne. Thou, O Christ, art the righteous Saviour, thou art the King of Israel, thou art the blessed of Jehovah, the Fountain of blessing to all believers, thy favour is the defence and protection of the church militant.—(32.)

10. Concerning passages of this imprecatory kind in the book of Psalms, it is to be observed that they are not spoken of private and personal enemies, but of the opposers of God and his Anointed; nor of any among these but the finally impenitent, and this by way of prediction, rather than of imprecation. This would appear if the verbs were translated uniformly in the future tense, as they might be, and indeed should be translated. The words, rendered in this form, contain a prophecy of the infatuation, rejection, and destruction of such as persevere in their opposition to the Divine counsels.—*Bp. Horne.*

This and all similar passages in the Psalms will bear to be translated in the future tense. As if David had said, Thou wilt destroy them, O God, and let them fall by their own counsels; thou wilt cast them out, &c. For want of observing this, many have been stumbled at the apparent want of benevolence on the part of David. These words are a distinct but awful prophecy of the judgments which await the enemies of Christ and his church.—*Morison.*

PSALM VI.

The method of this psalm is such as we often meet with. The psalmist begins with doleful complaints, but ends with joyful praises. (1.) He pours out complaints before God, deprecates his wrath, and begs earnestly for the return of his favour, ver. 1—7. (2.) He assures himself of an answer of peace shortly, ver. 8—10.

Ver. 1—7. These verses speak the language of a heart truly humbled, of a broken and contrite spirit under great afflictions, sent on purpose to awaken conscience, and mortify corruption.

Observe, 1. The representation the psalmist makes to God of his grievances; he pours out his complaint before him: whither else should a child go with his complaints, but to his father? He complains of bodily pain and sickness. Let this help to reconcile us to pain and sickness, that it has been the lot of some of the best saints, and that we are directed and encouraged by their example to show before God our trouble in that case. He complains of inward trouble, and that is much more grievous than the vexation of the bones. Sickness brought his sin to his remembrance, and he looked upon it as a token of God's displeasure against him. It is a sad thing for a man to have his bones and his soul vexed at the same time; but this has been sometimes the lot of God's own people: nay, and this completed his complicated trouble, that it was continued upon him a great while, which is here intimated, "Thou, O Lord, how long?" To the living God we must, at such a time, apply ourselves, who is the only Physician both of body and mind.

2. The impression which his troubles made upon him. When sin sat heavy upon his conscience, and he was made to possess his iniquities; when his soul was wounded with the sense of God's wrath, and his withdrawals from him, then he mourns in secret, and even his soul refuses to be comforted. Note; It has often been the lot of the best men, to be men of sorrows; our Lord Jesus himself was so. Our way lies through a vale of tears, and we must accommodate ourselves to the climate. It well becomes the greatest spirits to relent, under the tokens of God's displeasure. One essential difference between the believer and other men, consists in great tenderness of conscience, and a

disposition to mourn for sin with brokenness of heart. True penitents weep in their retirements. Sorrow for sin ought to be great sorrow. The triumphs of wicked men in the sorrows of the saints add very much to their grief.

3. The petitions which he offers up to God in this distressed state. That which he dreads as the greatest evil, is the anger of God. He can bear the rebuke and chastening, if God, at the same time, lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and by his Spirit make him to hear the joy and gladness of his loving-kindness. The affliction of his body will be tolerable, if he have but comfort in his soul. Christ's sorest complaint, in his sufferings, was of the trouble of his soul, and of the suspension of his Father's smiles. He never complained of the rage of his enemies, or the unkindness of his friends. But he cried with a loud voice, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Let us thus deprecate the wrath of God more than any outward trouble, and take heed of treasuring up wrath against a day of affliction. That which he desires as the greatest good, and which would be to him the restoration of all good, is, the favour and grace of God. He prays that God would pity him, that God would pardon his sins; this is chiefly intended in that petition, Have mercy upon me. That God would put forth his power for his relief; Save me, speak the word, and I shall be whole. That he would be at peace with him. Thou hast seemed to depart from me; but now, Lord, return, and show thyself nigh to me. That he would especially preserve the inward man, whatever becomes of the body; O Lord, deliver my soul from sinning, from sinking, from perishing for ever. It is an unspeakable privilege, that we have a God to go to in our afflictions; and it is our duty to go to him, and thus to wrestle with him, and we shall not seek in vain.

Every page of scripture proclaims the fact that salvation is only of the Lord. Man is a sinner, his case can only be reached by mercy; never is mercy more illustrious than in restoring backsliders.—(47.)

4. The pleas with which he enforces his petitions. They that sincerely seek God's glory, and desire and delight to praise him, may pray in faith, Lord, send me not to that dreadful place where there is no devout remembrance of thee, nor any thanks given to thee. Even the

death of the body puts an end to our opportunity of glorifying God in this world, and serving his kingdom among men. Therefore we may, with good reason, pray, that if it be the will of God, and he has any further work for us or our friends to do in this world, he will yet spare us or them to serve him. To depart and be with Christ, is happiest for saints themselves; but for them to abide in the flesh is more profitable for the church.

Ver. 8—10. What a sudden change is here! Having made his request known to God, he is very confident his sorrow will be turned into joy.

He distinguishes himself from the wicked and ungodly, ver. 8. When he was in the depth of his distress, he was afraid that God's wrath against him would give him his portion with the workers of iniquity; but now he is assured that his soul shall not be gathered with sinners, for they are not his people. He began to suspect himself to be one of them, because of the heavy pressure of God's wrath; but now that his fears are silenced, he bids them depart. The workers of iniquity had taunted him, and asked him, Where is thy God? triumphing in his despondency, but now he had wherewith to answer them that reproached him, for God had now comforted his spirit, and would shortly complete his deliverance. Perhaps they had tempted him to do as they did, to betake himself for ease to the pleasures of sin. But now, Depart from me, I will never lend an ear to your counsel. This good use we should make of God's mercies to us, we should thereby have our resolution strengthened never to have any thing to do with sin and sinners. Our Lord Jesus seems to take these words, when having all judgment committed to him, he shall say, Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, Luke 13. 27.

He is confident of a gracious answer. By the workings of God's grace upon his heart, he knew his prayer was graciously accepted, and therefore did not doubt but it would, in due time, be effectually answered. His prayers were cries to God; Thence he infers the like favourable reception of all his other prayers.

His prayers will be, instead of a burnt-offering, as sweet incense, as what is grateful and delightful, coming up out of the hands of Christ the Mediator. The word

signifies prayer made to God, the righteous Judge, as the God of his righteousness, who would vindicate his cause, and right his wrongs. A believer, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, can go to God as a righteous God, and plead with him for pardoning and cleansing, who is just and faithful to grant both unto him.—(27.)

He prays for the conversion, or predicts the destruction of his enemies and persecutors. It may very well be taken as a prayer for their conversion. Let them return to a better temper and disposition of mind, and let them be ashamed of what they have done against me. If they are not converted, it is a prediction of their confusion and ruin. They that will not give glory to God, shall have their faces filled with everlasting shame.

Sinners of every rank have sorrowed, and wept for their transgressions; but Jesus alone was a sinless sufferer; and through his sufferings alone can the penitent find mercy. But at length He will bid the impenitent workers of iniquity to depart from him; then will all his enemies be confounded, and vexed, and so perish with an everlasting destruction.

PSALM VII.

It appears by the title, that this psalm was penned with reference to the malicious imputations David was unjustly laid under by his enemies. Being thus wronged, (1.) He applies to God for favour, ver. 1, 2. He appeals to God concerning his innocence, ver. 3—5. He prays to God to plead his cause, and judge for him against his persecutors, ver. 6—9. (2.) He expresses his confidence in God, that he would return the mischief upon the head of those that designed it, ver. 10—16. He promises to give God the glory of his deliverance, ver. 17. If this David was a type of Christ, who was himself, and still is in his members, thus injured, but will certainly be righted at last.

Title. Cush, the Benjaminite. This probably denoted Saul. David might for many reasons not express his proper name, therefore he points him out enigmatically, of which there are many examples in scripture. Cush means Ethiopian, and might be in allusion to the black and wicked disposition of Saul. Or, Cush may have been some officer under Saul.—Poole.

Ver. 1—9. In these verses David puts himself under God's protection, and flies to him for succour. He pleads, 1. His relation to God. Thou art my God, I

am one of thy servants, who may expect to be protected. 2. His confidence in God; Lord, save me, for I depend upon thee; in thee do I put my trust, and not in any arm of flesh. 3. The rage and malice of his enemies, and the imminent danger he was in. 4. The failure of all other helpers. It is the glory of God to help the helpless.

He makes a solemn protestation of his innocency as to those things whereof he was accused, and appeals to God, the Searcher of hearts, concerning it. When falsely accused by men, it is a great comfort if our own consciences acquit us. Happy indeed when not only they cannot prove their calumnies, Acts 24. 13, but when our hearts can disprove them.

But Christ alone could call upon heaven to attest his universal uprightness. In his hands there was no iniquity, all his works were wrought in perfect righteousness; and when the prince of this world came to try him, he found nothing whereof justly to accuse him. Yet for our sakes submitting to the imputation of guilt, he suffered all these, but being innocent, he triumphed over them all.—32

He was charged with a traitorous design against Saul. This he utterly denies: he never did this, there was no iniquity of this kind in his hand; he abhorred the thought of it. It is hard to prove a negative, and yet this David could produce very good proof of; I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy: see 1 Sam. 24. 4—7; 26. 11, 12. Saul himself owned these to be undeniable proofs of David's integrity. He intimates, ver. 5, that if he had been indeed injurious to others, he had reason to expect that they would repay him. In that case he could not with any confidence go to God, and beg of him to deliver him, or plead his cause. It is presumptuous, and dangerous, for any that are guilty and suffer justly, to appeal to God as if they were innocent and suffered wrongfully; such must humble themselves, and accept the punishment of their iniquity. The Christian would deem himself worthy of all the injury and ignominy which his foes intend, were he guilty of the crimes whereof they accuse him.

He prays that God would manifest his wrath against his enemies, and plead their wrath against him. God's appearing on David's behalf, and fulfilling his promise to him, would be such an instance

of his righteousness, goodness, and faithfulness as would greatly enlarge the hearts of all his faithful worshippers, and fill their mouths with praise.

He prays for the conversion of sinners, and the establishment of saints, ver. 9. Here are two things which every one of us must desire, and may hope for. 1. The period of sin; that it may be brought to an end in ourselves and others. And this all that love God, and for his sake hate evil, desire and pray for. 2. The perpetuity of righteousness. As we pray that the bad may be made good, so we pray that the good may be made better, that they may be confirmed in the ways of God, may be firm to God, and zealous in their endeavours to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. His plea to enforce this petition is, For the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins: he knows the secret wickedness of the wicked, and how to bring it to an end, the secret sincerity of the just he is witness to, and has ways of establishing.

When a man hath made peace with God about all his sins, upon the terms of grace and mercy, through the sacrifice of the Mediator, he may in comparison with his enemies, on a particular case, appeal to God's justice to decide.—(33)

Ver. 10—17. David is confident that he shall find God his powerful Saviour. My shield is upon God, so some read it; there is that in God which gives an assurance of protection to all that are his. His name is a strong tower, Prov. 18. 10. Two things David builds this confidence upon. 1. He saves the upright in heart, saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom; he saves them out of their present troubles, as far as is good for them. 2. God judgeth the righteous; he owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him.

He is no less confident of the destruction of his wicked persecutors, who would not repent, to give glory to God. As his mercies are new every morning toward his people, so his anger is new every morning, against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given by their renewed transgressions. The destruction they are reserved for, is destruction from the Almighty, which ought to be a terror to every one, ver. 13, 14. The destruction

of sinners may be prevented by their conversion, for it is threatened, If he turn not from his evil way, if he do not let fall his enmity against the people of God, then let him expect it will be his ruin; but if he turn, it is implied that his sin shall be pardoned, and all be well. Thus even the threatenings of wrath are introduced with a gracious implication of mercy. They that perish might have turned and lived, but they chose rather to go on and die. But if ruin be not thus prevented by the conversion of the sinner, it will be prepared for him by the justice of God. If God will slay, he does not want instruments of death for any creature; even the least and weakest may be made so when he pleases. While God is preparing his instruments of death, he gives sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent, and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish. The longer the destruction is delayed, to give time for repentance, the sorer will it be, and the heavier will it fall, if that time be not improved while God is waiting. The destruction of impenitent sinners, though it comes slowly, yet comes surely. Against persecutors more than any other, God has ordained his arrows.

The sinner is described, ver. 11—16, as taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to ruin his soul than, if directed aright, would save it. This is true, in a sense, of all sinners: they prepare destruction for themselves, by loading themselves with guilt, and submitting themselves to their corruptions. It is often remarkable in those who contrive mischief against the people of God. All their subtle projects will concur in bringing about this event.

Let us then under all our trials look to the Saviour. He alone was perfect in righteousness, yet none was ever reviled, slandered, and hated as he was. He lived doing good to his enemies, and died praying for them; but after his exaltation it was needful that judgment should be executed upon those that continued impenitent. The Jews first felt the weight of his indignation; anti-christian persecutors have from time to time been destroyed. Shortly will arrive the final judgment, then all unbelievers shall perish. May we then be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting.

Blessed Lord, in persecutions, in sufferings, in reproaches, thou hast the pre-

eminence. Oh! for grace to look to thee in the path of tribulation, going before thy church and people, and marking the way by thine own spotless example! and for larger portions of that meekness of spirit by which thy path was distinguished. Under all the persecutions which in our lesser trials mark our way, let an eye to Jesus animate our minds and comfort our hearts.—(37.)

11. God is a righteous Judge, and God is ever threatening.—*Coverdale*.—*A. Clarke*.

PSALM VIII.

This psalm is a solemn meditation on the glory and greatness of God. For the proof of God's glory, the psalmist gives instances of his goodness to man; for God's goodness is his glory. God is to be glorified, (1.) For making known himself and his great name to us, ver. 1. For making use of the weakest of the children of men, by them to serve his own purposes, ver. 2. (2.) For making even the heavenly bodies useful to man, ver. 3, 4. For making him to have dominion over the creatures in this lower world, and thereby placing him but little lower than the angels, ver. 5—9. This psalm is in the New Testament applied to Christ, and the work of redemption which he wrought. The honour given by the children of men to him, ver. 2; Matt. 21. 16; and the honour put upon the children of men by him, both in his humiliation, when he was made little lower than the angels, and in his exaltation, when he was crowned with glory and honour, ver. 5, 6; Heb. 2. 6—8; 1 Cor. 15. 27. When observing the glory of God in the kingdom of nature and providence, we should be led to contemplate his glory in the kingdom of grace.

Ver. 1, 2. The psalmist seeks to give to God the glory due to his name.

How bright this glory shines even in this lower world! How excellent is his name in all the earth! The works of creation and providence proclaim that there is an infinite Being, the Fountain of all being, power, and perfection, the sovereign Ruler, powerful Protector, and bountiful Benefactor of all the creatures. He is ours, for he made us, protects us, and takes special care of us. He must be ours, for we are bound to obey him, and submit to him. How great, how illustrious, how magnificent is his name in all the earth!

The light of it shines in men's faces every where, Rom. 1. 20; if they shut their eyes against it, that is their fault. There is no speech or language, but the voice of God's name either is heard in it, or may be. But this looks further, to the gospel of Christ, by which the utmost ends of the earth have been made to see God's great salvation, Mark 16. 15, 16.

How illustrious is the name of Jesus throughout the world! His incarnation, birth, humble and obscure life, preaching, miracles, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, are celebrated through the whole world. His religion, the gifts and graces of his Spirit, his people, christians, his gospel, and the preachers of it, are every where spoken of. No name is so universal, no power and influence so generally felt, as those of the Saviour of mankind.—(11.)

How much brighter it shines in the upper world! God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than the noblest of creatures. We, on this earth, only hear God's excellent name, and praise that; the angels and blessed spirits above, see his glory, and praise that; yet he is exalted far above even their blessing and praise. In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, who is the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his person, God set his glory above the heavens, far above all principalities and powers.

How powerfully he discovers it by the weakest of his creatures! 1. In the kingdom of nature. The care God takes of little children, (when they first come into the world, the most helpless of all animals,) the special protection they are under, ought to be acknowledged, to the glory of God, as a great instance of his power and goodness; and the more sensibly, because we have all had the benefit of it. 2. In the kingdom of Providence. In the government of this lower world, he makes use of the children of men, some that know him, and others that do not. Isa. 45. 4. Sometimes he is pleased to serve his own purposes by the ministry of such as are still, in wisdom and strength, little better than babes and sucklings. 3. In the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of the Messiah. The gospel is called the arm of the Lord, and the rod of his strength; this was ordained to work wonders out of the mouths of a company of poor fishermen, who lay under the greatest

outward disadvantages. Yea, we read of children crying, Hosanna to the Son of David, when the chief priests and Pharisees owned him not, but despised and rejected him; to that our Saviour applies thus, Matt. 21. 16. Sometimes the grace of God appears wonderfully in young children; he teaches them knowledge, and even deems himself honoured by their praises. Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things in his church by very weak and unlikely instruments, that no flesh might glory in his presence, but the excellency of the power might the more evidently appear to be of God, and not of man, 1 Cor. 1. 27, 28. This he does, because of his enemies, that he may put them to silence, and be justly avenged on the avengers: see Acts 4. 14; 6. 10.

Ver. 3—9. The psalmist here goes on to magnify the honour of God, by recounting the honours he has put upon man; especially the man Christ Jesus. The condescensions of the Divine grace call for our praises as much as the elevations of the Divine glory: how God has condescended in favour to man, the psalmist here observes with wonder and thankfulness, and recommends it to our thoughts.

The psalmist is supposed to have had before his eyes the heavens as they appear by night. He is struck with the awful magnificence of the wide extended firmament, adorned by the moon walking in brightness, and a multitude of shining orbs, differing from each other in magnitude and splendour. And when, from surveying the beauty of heaven with its glories, he turns to take a view of the creature man, he is still more affected by the mercy than he had been by the majesty of the Lord. Far less wonderful is it that God should make such a world as this, than that He, who made such a world, should be mindful of man in his fallen state, and visit human nature with his salvation.—(32.)

Observe, it is our duty to consider the heavens: that man thus may be directed to set his affections on things above; for what we see, has not its due influence upon us, unless we consider it. What is man, so mean a creature, that he should be thus honoured! so sinful a creature, that he should be thus favoured!

Though man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm, Job 25. 6, yet God puts respect upon him, and shows him abun-

dance of kindness ; man is, above all creatures in this world, favoured of Providence.

He is made but a little lower than the angels ; lower indeed, because by his body he is allied to the earth, and to the beasts that perish, and yet by his soul, which is spiritual and immortal, he may be truly said to be but a little lower than they. He is but for a little while lower than the angels ; the children of the resurrection shall be no longer lower than they, Luke 20. 36.

He is endowed with noble faculties and capacities. God, who gave him his being, has distinguished him, and qualified him for a dominion over the inferior creatures. Man's reason is his crown of glory ; let him not profane that crown by disturbing the use of it, nor forfeit that crown by acting contrary to its dictates.

He is invested with a sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is constituted their lord. This is such a display of the Divine love to us vile sinners, as cannot be expressed or comprehended, but should be humbly admired and adored. Every time we partake of them, we realize this dominion which man has over the works of God's hands ; and it is a reason for our subjection to God, our chief Lord, and his dominion over us.

But this refers, in a particular manner, to Jesus Christ ; of him we are taught to expound it, Heb. 2. 6—8, where the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ both in heaven and in earth, shows that he is that man, that Son of man, here spoken of, whom God has crowned with glory and honour, and made to have dominion over the works of his hands. The greatest favour ever showed to the human race, and the greatest honour ever put upon human nature, were exemplified in the incarnation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus ; these far exceed the favours and honours done us by creation and providence, though they also are great, and far more than we deserve. In this, every other instance of Divine condescension is eclipsed, all our thoughts are swallowed up, and our contemplations must issue in wonder, love, and praise.

We have reason humbly and thankfully to admire the grace of God, that Jesus Christ assumed the nature of man, and, in that nature, humbled himself. He became the Son of man, a partaker of flesh and blood ; being so, God visited

him ; which some apply to his sufferings for us, as it is said, Heb. 2. 9, For the suffering of death, a visitation in wrath, he was crowned with glory and honour. God visited him. Having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, he reckoned with him for it, visited him with a rod and with stripes, that we by them might be healed. He was, for a little while, so the apostle interprets it, made lower than the angels, when he took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation. And in that nature he is exalted to be Lord of all. God the Father exalted him, because he had humbled himself ; crowned him with glory and honour, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were ; set him at his own right hand ; constituted him not only the Head of the church, but Head over all things to the church ; and gave all things into his hand, the kingdom of providence, in conjunction with, and subservience to the kingdom of grace. All the creatures are put under his feet ; and, even in the days of his flesh, he showed his power over them, as when he commanded the winds and the seas, and appointed a fish to pay his tribute.

With good reason therefore does the psalmist conclude as he began, Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, which has been honoured with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlightened by his gospel, and governed by his wisdom and power ! What words can reach his praises, who is now become our salvation, and has a right to our obedience as our Redeemer ?

PSALM IX

In this psalm, (1.) David praises God for pleading his cause, and giving him victory over his enemies and the enemies of his country, ver. 1—6. He triumphs in the assurance he had of God's judging the world, ver. 7, 8, and protecting his oppressed people, ver. 9, 10, and calls upon others to join with him in his songs of praise, ver. 11, 12. (2.) He prays to God, that he might have still further occasion to praise him, for his own deliverances, and the confusion of his enemies, ver. 13, 14, the bringing his and their enemies to ruin, and protecting his oppressed people, ver. 15—20.

This is very applicable to the kingdom of the Messiah, the enemies of which

have been, in part, destroyed already, and shall be more and more, till they all are made his footstool.

Title. Muth-labben is generally supposed to mean the death of the strong man, or champion, and to refer to David's victory over Goliath.

Ver. 1—10. In these verses David excites and engages himself to praise God for what he had done for him. God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvellous works. If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity, and be fervent in the duty, with our whole heart. When we give thanks for some one particular mercy, we should remember former mercies, and so show forth all his marvellous works. Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy. Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must not be in the gift so much as in the Giver. When God has showed himself above the enemies of the church, we must give glory to him as the Most High. The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed: see Rev. 12. 10; 19. 5; 15. 3, 4.

David acknowledges the almighty power of God, as that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies were no way able to contest with, or stand before. The presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, are sufficient for the destruction of his and his people's enemies. He gives to God the glory of his righteousness, in appearing on his behalf. We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and that with him there is no unrighteousness. He records, with joy, the triumphs of the God of heaven over all the powers of hell, and attends those triumphs with his praises. God had checked them. He had cut them off. He had buried them in oblivion and perpetual infamy.

He exults over the enemy whom God thus appears against. Their destruction is just, and it is total and final; the very memorial of their cities should perish with them. Such desolations do the righteous judgments of God make upon sinners, that great and populous cities have been so reduced, that their very memorial is perished; those who have sought them, could not find where they stood; but we look for a city that has stronger foundations.

David comforts himself, and others, in God, and he pleases himself with the thoughts of his eternity. Our liberties, our privileges, our lives, may be put an end to, but our God is still the same, unshaken, undisturbed, 29. 10; 93. 2. Also with the thoughts of his sovereignty both in government and judgment. With the thoughts of his justice and righteousness. He does all, every day, and will do all, at the last day, according to the eternal, unalterable rules of equity; and with the thoughts of that peculiar favour which God bears to his own people, and the special protection which he takes them under. They may, by faith, flee to him as their Refuge, and may depend upon his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done them. Also with the thoughts of that sweet satisfaction and repose of mind which they have, that make God their Refuge.

Those who know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness, will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred, and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those who know him to be an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care, and trust in him at all times, even to the end. The more God is trusted, the more he is sought unto. If we trust God, we shall seek him by faithful and fervent prayer, and by constant care to approve ourselves to him in the whole course of our conversation. God never did, nor ever will disown or desert any that duly seek to him and trust in him. Though he afflict them, he does not leave them comfortless; though he seem to forsake them for a while, yet he will gather them with everlasting mercies.

Ver. 11—20. David, having praised God himself, calls upon and invites others to praise him likewise. Those who believe that God is greatly to be praised, not only desire to praise him better themselves, but desire that others may join with them, and would gladly bring them to it. As the special residence of his glory is in heaven, so the special residence of his grace is in his church, of which Zion was a type. There he meets his people with his promises and graces, and there he expects they should meet him with their praises and services. He calls upon others to declare among the people his doings. Let them particularly take notice of the

justice of God in avenging the blood of his people.

There is a day coming when God will make inquisition for blood, when he will discover what has been shed secretly, and **avenge** what has been shed unjustly: see Isa. 26. 21; Jer. 51. 36. In that day it will appear how precious the blood of God's people is to him, 72. 14, when it must all be accounted for. It will then appear that he has not forgotten the cry of the humble; neither the cry of their blood, nor the cry of their prayers.

David, having praised God for former mercies and deliverances, earnestly prays that God would still appear for him. We are never brought so low, so near to death, but God can raise us up. If he has saved us from spiritual and eternal death, we may thence hope, that in all our distresses he will be a very present help to us. Observe his sincere purpose to praise God, when his victories should be completed, ver. 14. David would **attend** upon him, with joy in God's salvation, typical of the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Son of David.

David by faith foresees and foretells the certain ruin of all wicked people, both in this world and in that to come. The overruling providence of God frequently so orders it, that persecutors and oppressors are brought to ruin by the very projects they intended to be destructive to the people of God. Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentious bring mischief upon themselves; and thus men's sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all, that the destruction of sinners is of themselves. It is known that there is a God who judges in the earth; that he is a righteous God, and one that hates sin, and will punish it. In these judgments, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The psalmist therefore adds, *Higgaion*; it is a thing to be carefully observed and meditated upon. What we see of present judgments, and what we believe of the judgment to come, ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations.

All wickedness came originally with the wicked one from hell; thither it will be again remitted, and they who hold on its side must accompany it on its return to that place of torment, there to be shut up for ever. The true state both of nations

and of individuals may be correctly estimated from one single circumstance, namely, whether in their doings they remember or forget God.—(32.)

David encourages the people of God to wait for his salvation, though it should be long deferred. We may build upon it as undoubtedly true, that God's people, God's elect, shall not always be forgotten, nor shall they be disappointed of their hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them, at last, but will make it appear that he never did forget them; it is impossible he should, and we have abundant reason still to say, *Arise, O Lord*, let not Satan or man prevail to confine thy church within narrow limits, to corrupt it by heresies and scandals, or to distract it by divisions and disputes. Put those in fear and to shame who arrogate to themselves more than can belong to fallible, sinful, mortal man; humble and convert every opposer, and destroy every system of superstition and delusion, that all the inhabitants of the earth may know themselves to be lost sinful men, that they may gladly welcome the Saviour, and become his willing subjects.

Strange that man, dust in his original, sinful by his fall, continually reminded of both by every thing in him and about him, should yet stand in need of some sharp affliction, some severe visitation from God, to bring him to the knowledge of himself, and make him feel who, and what he is.—(32.)

PSALM X.

The Greek translation joins this psalm with the ninth, and makes them but one; but the Hebrew makes it a distinct psalm; the scope and style are certainly different. The psalmist (1.) complains of the wickedness of the wicked, and notices the delay of God's appearing against them, ver. 1—11. (2.) He prays to God to appear against them for the relief of his people, and comforts himself with hopes that He will do so in due time, ver. 12—18.

Ver. 1—11. The psalmist, in these verses, discovers a very great affection to God and his favour. God's withdrawals are very grievous to his people at any time, but especially in times of trouble. We stand afar off from God by our unbelief, and then we complain that God stands afar off from us. He beholds the

transgressors, and is grieved, is amazed, and brings to his heavenly Father their evil report: not in a way of vain-glory, Luke 18. 11, much less venting any personal resentments of his own; but as one that laid to heart what is offensive to God, and earnestly desired reformation. Passionate invectives against bad men do more hurt than good; if we speak of their badness, let it be to God in prayer—he can make them better.

This representation of the wickedness of the wicked, is summed up in the first words of it, The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor; where two things are laid to their charge, pride and persecution; the former the cause of the latter. Proud men will have all about them to be of their mind, of their religion, to say as they say, to submit to their dominion, and acquiesce in their dictates; and those that will not yield to them, they hate with inveterate hatred. Tyranny owes its origin to pride. The psalmist, having begun this description, inserts a short prayer. Let them be taken, as the proud often are, in the devices that they have imagined.

These two heads of the charge are much enlarged upon. The sinner proudly glories in his power and success. See here, ver. 4, the nature of impiety and irreligion; it is, not seeking after God, and not having him in our thoughts. No inquiry is made after him, Job 35. 10; Jer. 2. 6, there is no desire toward him, no communion with him, and a secret wish to have no dependence upon him, and not to be beholden to him. Wicked people will not seek after God, that is, will not call upon him; they live without prayer, and that is living without God. They have many thoughts, many projects and devices, but no eye to God in any of them, no submission to his will, nor aim for his glory. The cause of this impiety and irreligion is pride. Men will not seek after God, because they think they have no need of him; they think it a thing below them, to be religious. Tell them of God's judgments which will be executed upon those that go on still in their trespasses, and they will not be convinced that there is any reality in them; they are far above out of sight, and therefore they think them merely imaginary.

They are very cruel and barbarous. They are base and hypocritical, ver. 10. The sordid spirits of persecutors and oppressors will stoop to any thing for the compassing their wicked designs. They

could not thus break all the laws of justice and goodness toward man, if they had not first shaken off all sense of religion. When their consciences rebuked their wickedness, and threatened them with the consequences, they turned it off with this, God has forsaken the earth, Ezek. 8. 12; 9. 9.

3. Or, "Despising the Lord."

Ver. 12—18. Observe what the psalmist prays for; that God would himself appear: Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand: and that he would appear against their persecutors, ver. 15.

The lifting up of Jehovah's hand is also applied to the proclamation of the gospel. Isa. 49. 22, and when that gospel is attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power, then the most stubborn sinners are made obedient to the faith; then they drop all the weapons of hostility, and become a willing people in the day of Jehovah's power.—(47.)

The psalmist speaks with astonishment, at the wickedness of the wicked, and at the patience and forbearance of God toward them. It is because the day of reckoning is yet to come, when the measure of their iniquity is full. He pleads the notice God took of the impiety and iniquity of these oppressors. He pleads the dependence which the oppressed had upon him. He pleads the relation in which God is pleased to stand to us. He pleads the experience which God's church and people had of God's readiness to appear for them. He pleads their expectations from God, pursuant to their experience of him. But observe in what method God hears prayer. He first prepares the heart of his people, and then gives them an answer of peace; nor may we expect his gracious answer, but in this way: so that God's working upon us, is the best earnest of his working for us. He prepares the heart for prayer, by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts, and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto him for it, Prov. 16. 1, and take that as a leading favour.

Let the poor, afflicted, persecuted, or tempted believer recollect, that Satan is by usurpation the prince of this world, and that he is the father of all ungodly men. The children of God cannot ex-

pect much kindness, truth, or justice from such persons as crucified the Lord of glory. But this once suffering Jesus now reigns as King over all the earth, for the benefit of his church; and of his dominion there shall be no end. Let us then commit ourselves unto him, humbly trusting in his mercy. He will rescue the believer from every temptation, and break the arm of every wicked oppressor, and bruise Satan under our feet shortly. But from heaven alone will all sin and temptation be excluded. No Canaanite shall find entrance there: no lust shall remain in the heart of any inhabitant; no imperfection will be known; but all shall be complete in love, purity, and joy.

Faith beholds the Lord Jesus, as already manifested in his glorious majesty, the kingdoms of this world as become his, and the heathen no longer in the land of promise. Each individual experiences in himself a happy prelude to this manifestation, when Christ rules in his heart by the Spirit, and every appetite and affection is obedient to the sceptre of his kingdom.—(32.)

18. That man may be no more expelled the land.—*Boothroyd.*

PSALM XI.

In this psalm, we have David's struggle with, and triumph over a strong temptation to distrust God, and betake himself to indirect means for his own safety in a time of danger. It is supposed to have been penned when he began to feel the resentments of Saul's envy.

Observe, (1.) How he represents the temptation, ver. 1—3. (2.) How he puts it to silence with the serious consideration of God's providence, ver. 4, his favour to the righteous, and the wrath which the wicked are reserved for, ver. 5—7.

Ver. 1—3. Here is David's fixed resolution to make God his confidence. Those that truly fear God and serve him, are welcome to put their trust in him, and shall not be made ashamed of their doing so. The psalmist, before he gives an account of the temptation he was in to distrust God, records his resolution to trust in Him, as that which he was resolved to live and die by. He resists a temptation to the contrary. This may be taken either, 1. As the serious advice of his timorous friends; so many understand it, and with great probability. That

which grieved him in this motion, was, that it would savour of unbelief. Taking it thus, the two following verses contain the reasons of these friends. They would have him flee because he could not be safe where he was; Observe, say they, how the wicked aim at thy life. Also, because he could be no longer useful where he was. Alas, it is to no purpose to attempt the saving of a kingdom so wretchedly shattered; (as that was by Saul's mal-administration;) whatever the righteous can do, signifies nothing. Many are hindered from doing the service they might do to the public, in difficult times, by their despair of success. The believer, though not terrified by his enemies, may be tempted, by the fears of his friends, to desert his post, or neglect his work. They perceive his danger, but not his security; they give him counsel that savours of worldly policy rather than heavenly wisdom. Or, 2. It may be taken as a taunt of his enemies, upbraiding him with his professions of confidence in God, and scornfully bidding him try what stead that would stand him in now. The confidence and comfort which saints have in God, when all the hopes and joys in the creature fail, cannot be understood by a carnal world, and are ridiculed accordingly.

Taking it thus, the two following verses are David's answer to this sarcasm. In them he complains of the malice of those who did thus abuse him, and he resists the temptation with a gracious abhorrence, ver. 3. "If you destroy the foundations, if you take good people off from their hope in God, and can banter them out of their religion, you ruin them, and make them of all men the most miserable." The principles of religion are the foundations on which the faith and hope of the righteous are built. These we are concerned to hold fast against all temptations to infidelity: for if these be destroyed, if we let these go, what can the righteous do? Good people would be undone, if they had not God to go to, God to trust to, and future bliss to hope for.

Ver. 4—7. The attempt of David's enemies to discourage his confidence in God, engages him to cleave the closer to his first principles, and to review them to his own satisfaction, and the silencing of all temptations to unbelief. The prosperity of wicked people in their wicked evil ways, and the straits and distresses which

the best men are sometimes reduced to, tried his faith. He here considers,

1. That there is a God, a God in heaven; he is out of our sight, but we are not out of his. He is a God in covenant and communion with his people, through a Mediator, of whom the temple was a type. We need not say, Who shall go up to heaven, to fetch us thence a God to trust to? No, the word is nigh us, and God in the word; his Spirit is in his saints, those living temples, and the Lord is that Spirit.

2. That this God governs the world. Let us by faith see God on his throne of glory, infinitely transcending the majesty of earthly princes; on his throne of government, giving law to all the creatures; on his throne of judgment, rendering to every man according to his works; and on his throne of grace, to which his people may come boldly for mercy and grace: we shall then see no reason to be discouraged by oppressors, or any afflictions that attend the righteous.

3. That this God perfectly knows every man's true character; he not only sees them, but he knows what they think and what they design, whatever they pretend. We may know what men seem to be, but God knows what they are, as the refiner knows what the value of the gold is, when he has tried it. God is said to try with his eyes, and his eye-lids, because he knows men, not as earthly princes know them, by report and representation, but by inspection, which cannot err, or be imposed upon. This may comfort us when we are deceived in men, even in men that we think we have tried, that God's judgment of them is sure, according to truth.

4. That, if he afflict good people, it is for their trial, and therefore for their good. Let not afflictions therefore shake our foundations, or discourage our hope and trust in God.

5. That, however persecutors and oppressors may prosper a while, they now lie under, and will for ever perish under the wrath of God. He is a holy God, and therefore hates them. Their prosperity is so far from being an evidence of God's love, that their abuse of it does certainly make them the objects of his hatred. He is a righteous Judge, and therefore he will punish them, ver. 6. Their punishment will be inevitable, and very terrible. The fire of God's wrath will burn to the lowest hell, and to the

utmost line of eternity. What a horrible tempest are the wicked hurried away in, at death! Every man has the portion of his cup assigned him. They who choose the Lord for the portion of their cup, shall have what they choose, and be for ever happy in their choice, 16. 5; but they who reject his grace, shall be made to drink the cup of his fury, Jer. 25. 15; Isa. 51. 17; Hab. 2. 16.

6. That, though good people may be trampled upon, yet God does and will own and favour them. He loves them and the work of his own grace in them. He loveth his own image in his people. We must herein be followers of God, must love righteousness as he does, that we may keep ourselves always in his love. He looks graciously upon them; he is not only at peace with them, but well-pleased in them; and he comforts them, and puts gladness into their hearts, by letting them know that he is so. He, like a tender father, looks upon them with pleasure, and they, like dutiful children, are pleased and abundantly satisfied with his smiles. They walk in the light of the Lord.

Impenitent sinner! read this psalm, and mark your doom! The Judge stands at the door, the last call to repentance is about to be addressed to you, judgment is at hand, and through the gloomy shade of death you shall pass into the region of eternal wrath. Hasten then, O sinner, to the cross of Christ.—(47.)

How blessed it is to have a God in Christ to flee unto, and put our sure trust in. It is in the well-grounded confidence of salvation by Christ Jesus alone, that a true believer finds adequate support in every affliction. Real, solid, and substantial comfort does every regenerated believer find, who hath the Saviour for his hope, his righteousness, and salvation. How stands the case between God and our souls? Is Christ our hope, our consolation, our security? Then, and not otherwise, will the soul be carried through all its difficulties and conflicts.—(37.)

PSALM XII.

It is supposed that David penned this psalm, in the latter part of Saul's reign, when there was a general decay of honesty and piety, when religion, truth, and righteousness, seemed ready to expire, and every-kind of wickedness was without control, which he here complains off to God,

and very feelingly, for he himself suffered. The psalmist begs help of God, because there were none among men, whom he durst trust, ver. 1, 2. He foretells the destruction of his enemies, ver. 3, 4. He assures himself and others, that however things went now, God would preserve and secure to himself his own people, and would certainly make good his promises to them, ver. 5—8.

This psalm furnishes us with good thoughts for bad times; a man may comfort himself, with such meditations and prayers as are here. 1. Let us see what it is that makes the times bad, and when they may be said to be so. Ask the children of this world, what it is makes the times bad? they will tell you, Scarcity of money, decay of trade, and the desolations of war, make the times bad: but the scripture lays the badness of the times upon causes of another nature, 2 Tim. 3. 1, &c.; perilous times shall come, for iniquity shall abound: and that David here complains of. When there is a general decay of piety and honesty among men, the times are then truly bad, ver. 1.

Observe how these two characters are here put together, the godly and the faithful. As there is no true piety, so there is no true piety without honesty. Godly men are faithful men, fast men, so they have sometimes been called; their word is as confirming as their oath, as binding as their bond; they make conscience of being true both to God and man. They are here said to cease and fail, either by death, or by desertion, or by both. Those that were godly and faithful, were taken away, and those that were left, were sadly degenerated, and were not what they had been. When dissimulation and flattery prevail, then the times are very bad, ver. 2; when there is no such thing as sincerity to be met with: when an honest man knows not whom to believe, nor whom to trust. The prevalence of iniquity forms the worst times in the judgment of the spiritual mind, Jer. 9. 4, 5; Mic. 7. 5, 6. Woe to those who help to make the times thus perilous. When the enemies of God and religion are daring, then the times are very bad; when their language would intimate that God has no authority to command, or to judge them; not considering that He in whom we live, and we, and have our being, must be Lord of us.

He that made man's mouth will call him to an account for all his proud, profane, dissembling, or even useless words. When the poor and needy are oppressed, then the times are very bad: this is implied, ver. 5. God himself takes notice of the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy. When wickedness abounds, under the protection and countenance of those in authority, then the times are very bad, ver. 8. Bad men are base men, the vilest of men, and they are so, though they are ever so highly exalted in this world. It is bad with a kingdom, when such are preferred; no marvel if wickedness then grows insolent.

Let us now see what good things we are here furnished with for such bad times; and what times we may be reserved for, we cannot tell.

When times are bad, it is comfortable to think, 1. That we have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances. This he begins with, ver. 1; Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth. All other helps and helpers fail; even the godly and faithful are gone. Note; When godly faithful people cease and fail, it is time to cry, Help, Lord! 2. That God will certainly punish and restrain false and proud men, ver. 3. 3. That God will, in due time, work deliverance for his oppressed people, and shelter them from the malicious designs of their persecutors, ver. 5. This promise of God, which David here delivered by the spirit of prophecy, is an answer to that petition which he put up to God by the spirit of prayer. It is seasonable in the fittest time. Note; There is a time fixed for the rescue of oppressed innocence; that time will come, and we may be sure it is of all other the fittest time, 102. 13. It is effectual; so that, upon the whole, he shall lose nothing by his sufferings. 4. That, though men are false, God is faithful; though they are not to be trusted, God is. The words of the Lord are pure words, ver. 6. It denotes the sincerity of God's word, every thing is really as it is there represented, nor has it any other design towards us but our own good. The preciousness of God's word is compared to silver refined to the highest degree; it has nothing in it to depreciate it. How many proofs have been given of its power and truth! it has been often tried; all the saints, in all ages, have trusted it, and it never deceives.

them; but they have all set to their seal that God's word is true, they have found it so. Probably, this refers especially to these promises of succouring and relieving the poor and oppressed. The words of God we may rely upon; the less confidence is to be put in men's words, let us with the more assurance trust in God's word. 5. That God will secure his chosen remnant, how bad soever the times are, ver. 7. As long as the world stands, there will be a generation of proud and wicked men. But God will keep his own people from this generation, from mingling with them and learning their works; in times of general apostasy, the Lord knows them that are his, and they shall be enabled to keep their integrity; from being destroyed and rooted out by them, for the church is built upon a rock. In the worst of times, and in every age God will reserve to himself a holy seed, and preserve it to his heavenly kingdom.

While the faithful repose an unlimited confidence in God's promises, they have but too much reason to mourn the prevalence of wickedness, stalking, like its author, to and fro in the earth, ver. 8. Such is often the state of those here below; and our Lord's words, when his enemies drew near, may satisfy us how it comes to be so; It is your hour, and the power of darkness, Luke 22. 53. But that hour will quickly pass with us as it did with him, and the power of darkness will be overthrown; the Lord will be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended.—(32.)

All God's people are put into the hands of Christ our Saviour, and are preserved in him; there they are in safety, for out of his hands none can pluck them; and being built on him, the Rock, they are safe, notwithstanding the waves and winds of temptation or persecution come with ever so much force upon them.—(27.)

2. "Speak vanity." They are false and hollow. "With a double heart." In the Hebrew, with a heart and a heart. They seem to have two hearts; one to speak fair words, and the other to invent mischief.—*A. Clarke.*

PSALM XIII.

This psalm is the deserted soul's case and cure. The psalmist complains that God had long withdrawn from him, and delayed to relieve him, ver. 1, 2. He earnestly prays to God to consider his

case, and comfort him, ver. 3, 4. He assures himself of an answer of peace, and concludes the psalm with joy and triumph, because he concludes his deliverance to be as good as wrought, ver. 5, 6.

The psalmist, in affliction, is here pouring out his soul before God; his address is short, but the method is plain, and of use for direction and encouragement. The most eminent believers are sometimes left under great discouragement; for the chastisement of their sins, or the trial of their faith.

His troubles extort complaints, ver. 1, 2. It is some ease to a troubled spirit, to give vent to its griefs, at the throne of grace, where we are sure to find One who is afflicted in the afflictions of his people, and is troubled with the feeling of their infirmities; thither we have boldness of access by faith, and there we have freedom of speech. The psalmist complains of God's unkindness; so he construed it, and it was his infirmity. He thought God had forgotten him, had forgotten his promises to him, his covenant with him, and his former loving-kindness, which he took for an earnest of further mercy. Not that any good man can doubt the goodness, and faithfulness of God; but it is an expression of prevailing fear. God hid his face from him, so that he wanted that inward comfort in God, which he used to have, and herein he was a type of Christ upon the cross, crying out, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? God sometimes hides his face, and leaves his own children in the dark concerning their interest in him: and this they lay to heart more than any outward trouble whatsoever. Let the tempted, discouraged believer recollect that the Saviour soon subjoined, "It is finished," and the depth of his humiliation immediately preceded the dawn of his glorious exaltation.

The psalmist laments his uneasiness. Anxious cares are burdens with which good people often load themselves more than they need. He had a constant disposition to sorrow, it preyed upon his spirits; every day brought with it fresh occasions of grief. The bread of sorrows is sometimes the saint's daily bread; our Master himself was a man of sorrows. His enemies added to his grief. This he complained of as reflecting dishonour upon God, his power and promise. It is common to

temptation, when trouble lasts long, to think it will last always. Those that have long been without joy, begin to be without hope.

His complaints stir up his prayers, ver. 3, 4. We should never allow ourselves to make any complaints but what drive us to our knees. Observe here, what his petitions are; "Strengthen my faith;" for faith is the eye of the soul, with which it sees above, and sees through the things of sense. Lord, enable me to look beyond my present troubles, and to foresee a happy issue of them. Guide my way, enable me to look about me, that I may avoid the snares which are laid for me. Refresh my soul with the joy of thy salvation. That which revives the drooping spirits, is said to enlighten the eyes, 1 Sam. 14. 27; Ezra 9. 8. See what his pleas are. He mentions his relation to God, and interest in him; which called for speedy relief and succour. If his eyes were not lightened quickly, he concludes that he must perish. Nothing is more killing to a soul than the want of God's favour; nothing more reviving than the return of it. His enemies would triumph, and will say, they had prevailed. And will it be for God's honour to suffer them thus to trample upon all that is sacred both in heaven and earth?

The sudden, delightful changes in the book of psalms, is one of its most remarkable features. In an instant, we pass from the depth of despondency to the height of religious confidence and joy. It is thus ver. 5. All is gloomy dejection in ver. 1; but here the mind of the despondent worshipper rises superior to all its distressing apprehensions, and throws itself, without reserve, on the mercy and care of its Divine Redeemer.—(47.)

The psalmist's prayers are soon turned into praises, ver. 5, 6. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our countenance will be no more sad, 1 Sam. 1. 18.

Observe the method of his comfort.

God's mercy is the support of his faith. My case is bad enough, and I am ready to think it deplorable, till I consider the infinite goodness of God. Finding I have that to trust to, I am comforted, though I have no merit of my own. In former distresses, I have trusted in the mercy of

God, and I never found that it failed me; his mercy has in due time relieved me, and my confidence in it has in the mean time supported me. Even in the depth of this distress, when God hid his face from me, when without were fightings, and within were fears, yet I trusted in the mercy of God, and that was as an anchor. And still I do trust in thy mercy; so some read it. This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes in those that hope in his mercy, 147. 11.

His faith in God's mercy filled his heart with joy in his salvation; for joy and peace come by believing, Rom. 15. 13. Believing, ye rejoice, 1 Pet. 1. 8. Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart, which was now daily grieving, should rejoice in that salvation. Though weeping endure long, joy will return.

His joy in God's salvation would fill his mouth with songs of praise, ver. 6. I will sing unto the Lord. I will sing in hope of what he will do for me at last; being confident that all will end everlastingly well. He speaks of it as a thing past; He has dealt bountifully with me. By faith he had received the earnest of the salvation, and he was as confident of it as if it had been done already.

In this way believers will pour out their prayers, renouncing all hopes but in the mercy of God through the Saviour's blood, and sometimes suddenly, at others gradually they will find their burden removed, and their comforts restored. Believing, they will rejoice in his salvation, and their doleful complaints shall issue in songs of praise and thanksgiving. And if delays should take place, they who trust in the Lord's mercy shall at length rejoice in his salvation; they shall allow that their fears and complaints were unnecessary, and acknowledge that he hath dealt bountifully with them.

3. The Chaldee paraphrase is, Enlighten mine eyes in thy law, lest I sin, and sleep with them that are guilty of death.

6. The Greek version adds, "I will praise the name of the Lord most high."

PSALM XIV.

The apostle Paul, in quoting part of this psalm, Rom. 3. 10, &c. to prove that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and that all the world is guilty before God, leads us to understand it, in general, as a description of the depravity of the human

nature, the sinfulness of the sin we are conceived and born in, and the deplorable corruption of a great part of mankind, even of the world that lies in wickedness, 1 John 5. 19. But as in those psalms which are designed to discover our remedy in Christ, there is commonly an allusion to the psalmist himself, and some passages that are to be understood primarily of him; so in this psalm, which is designed to discover our wound by sin, there is allusion to the psalmist's enemies and persecutors, and the other oppressors of good men. Here he traces all these latter streams to the fountain, the general corruption of nature, and sees that not his enemies only, but all the children of men, were thus corrupted. (1.) Here is a charge exhibited against a wicked world, ver. 1. The proof of the charge, ver. 2, 3. (2.) A serious expostulation with sinners, especially with persecutors, ver. 4—6. A believing prayer for the salvation of Israel, and a joyful expectation of it, ver. 7.

Ver. 1—3. If we apply our hearts as Solomon, Eccl. 7. 25, to search out the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness, these verses will assist us in the search, and will show us that sin is exceeding sinful. Sin is the disease of mankind; see how malignant it is. It puts contempt upon the honour of God; for there is something of practical atheism at the bottom of all sin, ver. 1. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Even in the psalmist's time there were those who had arrived at such a height of impiety, as to deny the very being of a God, and the first and self-evident principles of religion. Observe the sinner here described; he is an atheist, one that saith there is no Judge or Governor of the world; no Providence presiding over the affairs of men. He says this in his heart; it is not his judgment, but his imagination. He cannot satisfy himself that there is none, but he wishes there were none, and pleases himself that it is possible there may be none; he is willing to think there is none. He dares not speak it out, lest he be undeceived, but he whispers it secretly in his heart, for the silencing of the clamours of his conscience, and the emboldening of himself in his evil ways. This sinner is a fool; he is simple and unwise, and this is an evidence of it: he is wicked and profane, and this is the cause of it. Note; Atheistical

thoughts are very foolish, wicked thoughts, and they are at the bottom of the wickedness that is in this world. The word of God is a discernor of these thoughts. No man will say, There is no God, till he is so hardened in sin, that it is become his interest that there should be none to call him to an account.

It puts disgrace and debasement upon the nature of man. Sinners are corrupt, quite degenerated from what man was in his innocent estate. All their faculties are disordered, so that they are become odious to their Maker, and utterly incapable of answering the ends of their creation. They do no good, but are the unprofitable burdens of the earth; they do God no service, bring him no honour, nor do themselves any real kindness. They do a great deal of hurt, for all sinful works are abominable works; sin is that abominable thing which God hates, Jer. 44. 4; and, sooner or later, it will be so to the sinner; it will be found to be hateful, 36. 2, an abomination of desolation, making desolate, Matt. 24. 15.

This disease has infected the whole race of mankind. God himself is an eye-witness, ver. 2, 3. Observe his inquiry; The Lord looked down from heaven; thence, with an all-seeing eye, he took a view of all the children of men. The result of this inquiry appeared, They are all gone aside, the apostasy is universal, there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is done by them, it is not of themselves, it is God's work in them. When God had made the world, he looked upon his own work, and all was very good, Gen. 1. 31, but, some time after, he looked upon man's work, and behold, all was very bad, Gen. 6. 5, every operation of the thought of man's heart was evil, only evil, and that continually. They are gone aside from the right way of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and are turned into the paths of the destroyer. Let us lament the corruption of our own nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God: since that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, let us not marvel that we are told we must be born again.

All the wickedness of men's words and actions springs from the corrupt fountain of their hearts. We should be thankful if we have been restrained from the destructive excesses into which many are hurried; but we ought not to rest in any

thing short of union with Christ, and a new creation to holiness by his Spirit. If we have experienced this blessed change, let us give the Lord all the glory, and let us pity and pray for our fellow sinners.

1. The Greek version is, "There is none who doeth good; no, not one," as in ver. 3.

3. After this verse, the Vatican Greek Septuagint, and Latin Vulgate, add four or five sentences which St. Paul, when he had recited this verse, adds, as quoted from other psalms or other places of scripture. Some scribe of the Greek version finding the texts altogether in Rom. 3. 13-15, and thinking Paul had cited them all from hence, probably put them all in here. But the Alexandrine Septuagint is free from the interpolation, and there is evidence that it was not in Origen's Greek Hexapla.—*Hall*.

Ver. 4-7. In these verses, the psalmist endeavours to convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way they are in, how secure soever they are in that way. He shows them their wickedness, their folly, and their danger, while they are apt to believe themselves very wise, and good, and safe. Their wickedness is described in four instances. They are themselves workers of iniquity; they design it, they practise it, and take as much pleasure in it as ever any man did in his business. They eat up God's people with as much greediness as they eat bread. It is meat and drink to persecutors, to be doing mischief; it is as agreeable to them as their necessary food. They call not upon the Lord. Note; Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself, but live in contempt of him. The reason why people run into all manner of wickedness is, because they do not call upon God for his grace. What good can be expected from those that live without prayer? They shame the counsel of the poor, and upbraid them with making God their refuge. Note; Those have a great deal to answer for, who not only live without religion themselves, but say and do what they can to put others out of conceit with it; with the duties, as if they were mean, melancholy, and unprofitable; with the privileges, as if they were insufficient to make a man happy. He shows them their folly—They have no knowledge; this is obvious; and their danger, ver. 5. Their own consciences condemned what they did, and filled them with secret terrors. They that will not fear God, may be made to fear at the shaking of a leaf.

He endeavours to comfort the people of God. They have God's presence, ver. 5; they have his protection, ver. 6. The

Lord is their refuge. In the judgment-day, it will add to the terror and confusion of sinners, to see God own the generation of the righteous, which they have hated. Also, with what they hope for; and that is the salvation of Israel, ver. 7. The psalmist comforted himself with an assurance, that God would in due time turn again their captivity. But surely this pleasing prospect looks further. He had, in the beginning of the psalm, lamented the general corruption of mankind; and, in the melancholy view of that, wished for the salvation, which, in the fulness of time, was to come out of Zion; salvation from sin; that great salvation which should be wrought out by the Redeemer, who was to come to Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, Rom. 11. 26.

All our acquaintance with the depravity of human nature, should endear to us salvation out of Zion, and while we rejoice in the prospect, and are waiting for the completion of our own salvation, we should long and pray for the enlargement and prosperity of the church. When the expected season shall arrive, that the Jews shall be readmitted into the church, then indeed Jacob will rejoice, and Israel be glad, and it shall ever move as life from the dead to the whole race of men, Rom. 11. 15. But in heaven alone shall the whole company of the redeemed rejoice, without alloy or interruption, for evermore.

The world is bad; O that the Messiah would come and change its character! There is a universal corruption; O for the times of reformation! Those times will be as joyful as these are melancholy. Then shall God turn again the captivity of his people; for the Redeemer shall lead captivity captive, and Jacob shall then rejoice. The triumphs of Zion's King will be the joys of Zion's children. The second coming of Christ, finally to extinguish the dominion of sin and Satan, will be the completing of this salvation, which is the hope, and will be the joy of every Israelite indeed. With the assurance of that, we should comfort ourselves and one another, with reference to the present sins of sinners, and sufferings of saints.

5. The Greek version is, "They were seized with terror when there was no fear."

6. But Jehovah is his refuge.—*Boothroyd*.

PSALM XV.

The scope of this short but comprehensive psalm, is, to show us the way to

heaven, and to convince us, that if we would be happy, we must be holy. Christ is himself the way, in whom we must walk as our way, Matt. 19. 17. In this psalm, by the question, ver. 1, we are directed and excited to inquire the way. By the answer to that question, in the rest of the psalm, we are directed where to walk, ver. 2—5. By the assurance in the close of the psalm, we are encouraged to walk in that way, ver. 5. It forms a beautiful contrast with the character of ungodly men, delineated in the preceding psalm.

Here is a very serious question concerning the characters of a citizen of Zion, ver. 1. Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Let me know who shall go to heaven. What kind of people are they whom thou wilt own, and crown with distinguishing and everlasting favours? This supposes that it is a great privilege to be a citizen of Zion, that all are not thus privileged, but a remnant only; and that men are not entitled to this privilege by their birth and blood. It concerns us all to put this question to ourselves, Lord, what shall I be, and do, that I may abide in thy tabernacle? Luke 18. 18; Acts 16. 30.

Observe to whom this inquiry is addressed; to God himself. Those that would find the way to heaven, must look up to God, must take direction from his word, and beg direction from his Spirit.

See how it is expressed in Old Testament language. By the tabernacle we may understand the church militant, typified by Moses's tabernacle, fitted to a wilderness state. There God manifests himself, and there he meets his people, as of old in the tabernacle of the testimony. Who shall dwell in this tabernacle? Who shall be accounted a true living member of God's church? We are concerned to inquire, because many pretend to a place in this tabernacle, who really have no part nor lot in the matter. By the holy hill we may understand the church triumphant, alluding to mount Zion, on which the temple was to be built by Solomon. It is the happiness of glorified saints, that they dwell in that holy hill; they are at home there, they shall be for ever there. It concerns us to know who shall dwell there, that we make it sure to ourselves that we shall have a place among them; we may then take the comfort of it, and rejoice in prospect of that holy hill.

There is a very plain and particular

answer to this question. Those that desire to know their duty, with a resolution to do it, will find the scripture a very faithful director, and conscience a faithful monitor. Let us see, then, the particular characteristic of a citizen of Zion.

1. He is one that is sincere in his religion. He is really what he professes to be; his conversation is uniform, he is consistent with himself, and endeavours to stand complete in all the will of God. His eye perhaps is weak, but it is single; he has his spots indeed, but he does not paint; an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile, John 1. 47; 2 Cor. 1. 12.

2. He is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do. He worketh righteousness; he walks in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord; is just both to God and man; and, in speaking to both, he speaks that which is the truth in his heart; his prayers, professions, and promises to God, come not out of feigned lips, nor dares he lie, or equivocate, in his converse with men. He scorns and abhors the gains of injustice and fraud; he reckons that that cannot be a good bargain, nor a saving one, which is made with a lie; and that he who wrongs his neighbour, though ever so plausibly, will prove, in the end, to have most injured himself.

3. He is one that contrives to do all the good he can, but is very careful to do hurt to no man, and is, in a particular manner, tender of his neighbour's reputation, ver. 3. He walks by that golden rule of equity, To do as he would be done by. He knows the worth of a good name, and therefore he defames no man, speaks evil of no man, makes not others' faults the subject of his common talk, much less of ridicule, nor speaks of them with pleasure; he makes the best of every body, and the worst of nobody. He does not take up a reproach, he neither raises it, nor receives it; he gives no credit or countenance to a calumny, but frowns upon a backbiting tongue, and so silences it, Prov. 25. 23. If an ill-natured character of his neighbour be given him, or an ill-natured story be told him, he will disprove it if he can; if not, it shall go no further.

4. He is one that values men by their virtue and piety, and not by the figure they make in the world, ver. 4. He thinks the better of no man's wickedness, for his

pomp and grandeur; in his eyes, a vile person is contemned. Wicked people are vile people, worthless and good for nothing; so the word signifies. They are vile in their choices, Jer. 2. 13; in their practices, Isa. 32. 6. For this, wise and good men condemn them, not denying them honour and respect as men in authority and power perhaps, 1 Pet. 2. 17; Rom. 13. 7, but, in their judgment of them agreeing with the word of God. They are so far from envying, that they pity them, despising their gains, Isa. 33. 15, as turning to no account; their dainties, 141. 4, their pleasures, Heb. 11. 24, 25, as insipid. They despise their society, 119. 115; 2 Kings 3. 14; they despise their taunts and threats, and are not disturbed thereby. He thinks the worse of no man's piety, for his poverty and meanness, but he honours them that fear the Lord. He reckons that serious piety, wherever it is found, puts honour upon a man, more than wealth, or a great name. He honours such, he esteems them very highly in love, desires their friendship and conversation, and an interest in their prayers, is glad of an opportunity to show them respect, or do them a kindness, pleads their cause, and speaks of them with veneration, rejoices when they prosper, grieves when they are removed, and their memory, when they are gone, is precious with him. By this, we may judge of ourselves in some measure. What rules do we go by in judging of others?

5. He is one that always prefers a good conscience before any worldly interest, or advantage. If he has promised to do any thing, though afterward it appear to his damage, in his worldly estate, yet he adheres to it, and changes not, ver. 4. See how mistaken even wise and good men may be; they may swear to their own hurt, which they were not aware of when they took the oath: but see how strong the obligation of an oath is, that a man must rather suffer loss to himself and his family, than wrong his neighbour by breaking his oath. An oath is a sacred thing, which we must not think to play fast and loose with.

6. He is one that will not increase his estate by unjust practices, ver. 5. Not by extortion. Not that it is any breach of the law of justice or charity, for the lender to share in the profit which the borrower makes of his money, any more than for the owner of the land to demand rent

from the occupant, money being, by art and labour, as improvable as land. But a citizen of Zion will not be rigorous and severe in recovering his right. Not by bribery; he will not take a reward against the innocent; he will not, for any gain, or hope of it to himself, do any thing to the prejudice of a righteous cause.

The psalm concludes with a ratification of this character of the citizen of Zion; he is like Zion-hill itself, which cannot be moved, but abides for ever, 125. 1. Every true living member of the church, like the church itself, is built upon a rock, which the gates of hell cannot prevail against. He that doeth these things, shall never be moved; shall not be moved for ever, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him; temptations shall not overcome him, troubles shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of present peace, or future bliss.

The union of these tempers, and this habitual conduct, can only spring from repentance for sin, faith in the Saviour, and love to him; therefore they form an unequivocal proof of our acceptance in him. In these respects let us examine and prove our ourselves, knowing that the image of Christ is, in some measure, formed in us, except we be reprobates.

PSALM XVI.

This psalm has something of David in it, but much more of Christ. It begins with expressions of devotion, which may be applied to Christ; but concludes with such confidence of a resurrection, and of so timely a one as to prevent corruption, as must be applied to Christ, to him only, and cannot be understood of David, as both St. Peter and St. Paul have observed, Acts 2. 24—31; 13. 35—37, for David died, and was buried, and saw corruption. (1.) David speaks of himself as a member of Christ, and thus speaks the language of all good christians, professing his confidence in God, ver. 1; his consent to him, ver. 2; his affection to the people of God, ver. 3; his adherence to the true worship of God, ver. 4; and his entire satisfaction in God, and the interest he had in Him, ver. 5—7. (2.) He speaks of himself as a type of Christ, and so he speaks the language of Christ himself, to whom the rest of the psalm is expressly applied, Acts 2. 25, &c. He spake of the special presence

of God with the Redeemer, in his services and sufferings, ver. 8. Of the prospect which the Redeemer had of his own resurrection, and the glory that should follow, which carried him cheerfully through his undertaking, ver. 9—11.

This psalm is entitled *Michtam*, which some translate a golden psalm, a very precious one, more to be valued by us than gold, yea than much fine gold; because it speaks so plainly of Christ and his resurrection, who is the true treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament.

Ver. 1—7. David here flies to God's protection with a cheerful believing confidence in it. Those that by faith commit themselves to the Divine care, and submit themselves to the Divine guidance, have reason to hope for the benefit of both. This is applicable to Christ, who prayed, Father, save me from this hour, and trusted in God that he would deliver him.

He recognises his solemn dedication of himself to God, as his God, ver. 2. It is the duty and interest of every-one of us to acknowledge the Lord for our Lord, to subject ourselves to him, and then to stay ourselves upon him. *Adonai* signifies My Sayer, the strength of my heart. Those who have avouched the Lord for their Lord, should often put themselves in mind of what they have done. Take the comfort of it, and live up to it.

He devotes himself to the honour of God, in the service of the saints, ver. 2, 3. Whatever good we do, it is all from God; we are indebted to him, not he to us. There are saints in the earth; and saints on earth we must all be, or we shall never be saints in heaven. Those that are renewed by the grace of God, and devoted to the glory of God, are saints on earth. The saints in the earth are "excellent ones," and yet some of them so poor, that they needed to have David's goodness extended to them. God makes them excellent by the grace he gives them. All that have taken the Lord for their God, delight in his saints as excellent ones, because they bear his image, and because he loves them. It is not enough to delight in the saints, but, we must show them the kindness they need, and abound in the labour of love to them. This is applicable to Christ. The salvation he wrought out for us, was no gain to God, for our ruin would have been no loss to him; but the goodness and benefit of it extend to us men, in whom he

delighted, Prov. 8. 31. For their sakes, says he, I sanctify myself, John 17. 19. Christ delights even in the saints on earth, notwithstanding their weaknesses and manifold infirmities, which is a good reason why we should.

David declares his resolution to have no fellowship with the works of darkness, ver. 4. We must hate idols and idolatry with a perfect hatred. At God's altar, because the blood made atonement, the drinking of it was most strictly prohibited, and the drink-offerings were of wine; but the devil prescribed to his worshippers to drink of the blood of the sacrifices, to teach them cruelty. Some make this applicable to Christ, showing the nature of the sacrifice he offered: it was not the blood of bulls and goats, offered according to the law, but his own blood; showing also the multiplied sorrows of the unbelieving Jews, who shed that blood, and hastened after another king, Cesar, and are still looking after another Messiah.

He repeats the solemn choice he had made of God for his portion and happiness, ver. 5, takes to himself the comfort of the choice, ver. 6, and gives God the glory of it, ver. 7. This is very much the language of a devout and pious soul in its gracious exercises. Most take the world for their chief good, and place their happiness in the enjoyments of it; but, The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; is the portion I make choice of, and will gladly take up with, how poor soever my condition is in this world. Let me have the love and favour of God, and be accepted of him; let me have satisfaction in the communications of his graces and comforts; let me have an interest in his promises, and a title by promise to everlasting life and happiness in the future state; and I have enough, I need no more, I desire no more, to complete my happiness. Would we do well and wisely for ourselves, we must take God, in Christ, to be the portion of our inheritance in the other world; heaven is an inheritance, God himself is the inheritance of the saints there, whose everlasting bliss is to enjoy him. We must take that for our home, our rest, our everlasting good, and look upon this world to be no more ours, than the country through which our road lies, when in a journey. He is the portion of our cup in this world, with which we are nourished and refreshed, and kept from fainting. The

saints and their bliss are kept by the power of God.

Rejoicing in this portion, ver. 6, those that have God for their portion, have a goodly heritage. What can they desire more or better? Return unto thy rest, O my soul, and look no further. Note; Gracious persons, though they still covet more of God, never covet more *than* God; but, being satisfied of his loving kindness, are abundantly satisfied *with* it, and envy not any their carnal mirth, and sensual pleasures and delights.

But so ignorant and foolish are we, that if left to ourselves, we shall forsake our own mercies for lying vanities; and therefore, if we have indeed taken God for our portion, and preferred spiritual and eternal blessings before those that are passing and temporal, we must thankfully acknowledge the power and goodness of Divine grace, directing and enabling us to make that choice.

God having given David counsel by his word and Spirit, his own thoughts instructed him in the night season. When he was silent and solitary, and retired from the world, then his own conscience, not only reflected with comfort upon the choice he had made, but instructed or admonished him concerning the duties arising out of this choice, and engaged and quickened him by faith to live upon God and to him. Those who have God for their portion, and who will be faithful to him, must give their own consciences leave to deal thus faithfully and plainly with them.

All this is applicable to Christ, who made the Lord his portion, and was pleased with that portion, made his Father's glory his highest end, and made it his meat and drink to seek that, and to do his will, and delighted to prosecute his undertaking, pursuant to his Father's counsel, depending upon Him to carry him through his undertaking.

2. "To Jehovah I say, Thou art my Lord, no good have I but from thee." The words "I say," are in all the versions except the Chaldee. They render the supplementary words unnecessary; here Messiah speaks to the Father.—*Boothroyd*. The supplementary words, however, have been approved by the best Jewish commentators, and by the Chaldee paraphrase.

4. The heathen in their idolatrous rites used the blood of their sacrifices in the libations to their deities. In some instances they drank the blood even of human victims:

"Perhaps the prophetic intimation under this clause is, that Messiah was to abolish all sacri-

fices and offerings, and by one oblation for ever to perfect them that were sanctified."—*Morison*.

Ver. 8—11. These verses are quoted by St. Peter in his first sermon, after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. 25—31, and he tells us expressly, that David in them speaks concerning Christ, and particularly of his resurrection. Something we may allow here of the workings of David's own pious and devout affections toward God, depending upon his grace to perfect every thing that concerned him, and looking for the blessed hope, and a happy state, on the other side death, in the enjoyment of God; but in these holy elevations toward God and heaven, he was carried by the spirit of prophecy, quite beyond the consideration of himself and his own case, to foretell the glory of the Messiah, in such expressions as were peculiar to that, and could not be understood of himself. The New Testament furnishes us with a key to the mystery of these lines. These verses must certainly be applied to Christ, as many other Old Testament prophecies, 1 Pet. 1. 11.

When he says, ver. 8, I shall not be moved, he supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock, as in his agony, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and he prayed that the cup might pass from him. When he says, ver. 9. "My flesh shall rest," it is implied, that he must put off the body, and therefore must go through the pains of death. It is likewise plainly intimated, that his soul must be separated from the body, that he should not only die, but be buried, and abide for some time under the power of death. Also that he should be wonderfully borne up by the Divine power, in suffering and dying. That he should not be moved, not driven off from his undertaking, nor sink under the weight of it; that he should not fail, nor be discouraged, Isa. 42. 4, but should persevere till he could say, It is finished. Though the service was hard, and he trod the winepress alone, yet he was not moved, Isa. 50. 7—9. Nay, his heart should rejoice, and his glory be glad; he should go on with his undertaking, not only resolutely, but with unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction; witness that saying, The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it? John 18. 11, and many like. By his "glory" is meant his tongue, as appears, Acts 2. 26. For our tongue is our

glory, and never more so, than when it is employed in glorifying God.

It is also showed that he should be brought up from death by a glorious resurrection. Being God's Holy One in a peculiar manner, sanctified to the work of redemption, and perfectly free from sin, he should not see corruption, nor feel it. We, who have so much corruption in our souls, must expect our bodies also will corrupt, Job 24. 19; but the Holy One of God, who knew no sin, saw no corruption.

He should be abundantly recompensed for his sufferings, with the joy set before him, ver. 11. In confidence of this, when he gave up the ghost, he said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit, and, Father, glorify me with thine own self. His being admitted into God's presence, would be the acceptance of his service; and his being set at his right hand, the recompense of it. Thus, he should have not only the glory he had with God, as God, before all worlds, but the joy and pleasure of a Mediator, in seeing his seed, and the success of his undertaking, Isa. 53. 10, 11.

Christ being the Head of the body, the church, these verses may, for the most part, be applied to all christians, guided and animated by the Spirit of Christ; and we may hence learn,

1. That it is our wisdom and duty to set the Lord always before us, and to see him continually as our chief good and highest end, our Owner, Ruler, and Judge, our gracious Benefactor, our sure Guide and strict Observer; and while we do thus, we shall not be moved either from our duty, or from our comfort. The power that upheld the Saviour is engaged to uphold the believer too.

2. That if our eyes be ever toward God, our hearts and tongues may ever rejoice in him.

3. That dying christians may put off the body, in believing expectation of a joyful resurrection. Our bodies have little rest in this world, but in the grave they shall rest as in their beds, Isa. 57. 2. Death destroys the hope of man, Job 14. 19, but not the hope of a good christian, Prov. 14. 32. He has hope in his death, living hopes in dying moments. Christ's resurrection is an earnest of ours, if we are his.

Those who live piously, may die comfortably. In this world, sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy; a fulness

of joy; our pleasures here are momentary, but those at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Happy are they who have God as their portion, wealth, and comfort, by his own gospel grant! This secures against want as well as against ruin; this secures direction in time, comfort in death, and glory through eternity; and how pleasant death and eternity appear, when Christ is considered as our way, our forerunner, and God in him our everlasting all in all!—(10.)

Through this thy beloved Son, and our dear Saviour, thou shalt show us, O Lord, the path of life; thou shalt justify our souls now, and raise our bodies by thy power at the last day; when earthly sorrow shall end in heavenly joy, momentary pain in everlasting happiness.—(32.)

8. The word "is" will be found in this passage as quoted, Acts 2. 25.

10. The context and the parallel place in Acts 2. 27. prove that "sheol," here rendered "hell," simply denote "the grave," the place of the Redeemer's sepulture, and that "my soul," is here intended to designate that life which actually expired on the cross, which Messiah gave for the sheep. John 10. 11, 15, which he laid down that he might take it again, ver. 17. The word is often used to express the vital principle in human bodies: Gen. 35. 18, &c.—*Morison*.

PSALM XVII.

David, being in great distress, addresses himself to God, and seeks shelter in him.

(1.) He appeals to God concerning his integrity, ver. 1—4. He prays to God still to be upheld in his integrity, ver. 5—7.

(2.) He prays to be preserved from the malice of his enemies, 8. He gives a character of his enemies, ver. 9—14. He comforts himself with the hopes of his future happiness, ver. 15. Some make him, in this, a type of Christ, who was innocent, yet was hated and persecuted; but, like David, committed himself and his cause to him that judgeth righteously.

The title in the Arabic version is, a prayer in the person of a perfect man, and of Christ himself, and every one that is redeemed by him.—(27.)

Ver. 1—7. This psalm is a prayer, for David addresses himself to God in these verses. God gives us leave to express our earnest desire of his gracious answers to our prayers. These things he pleads to God, 1. That he was sincere, the feelings of his mind agreed with the expressions of his mouth. Feigned prayers are fruitless; but if our hearts lead our

prayers, God will meet them with his favour. 2. That he had been used to pray, and it was not his distress and danger that now first brought him to his duty. 3. That he was encouraged by his faith to expect God would take notice of his prayers. Our believing dependence upon God is a good plea to enforce our desires.

David's cause, in his contests with his enemies, was good. The Lord knew his integrity. If we are misrepresented by unrighteous men, it is our comfort that we have a righteous God to go to, who will take our part, who is the patron of the oppressed, whose judgment is according to truth, by which every person and every cause will appear in a true light. He had not in secret indulged any known sin, nor allowed himself to speak sinful words. Note; Constant resolution and watchfulness against sins of the tongue, will be a good evidence of our integrity; If any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, Jam. 3. 2. He does not say, My mouth never shall transgress, (for in many things we all offend,) but I am purposed that it shall not; and He that searches the heart, knows whether the purpose be sincere. Aware of man's propensity to wicked works, and of his own peculiar temptations, he had made God's word his preservative from the paths of Satan—which lead to destruction. Note; The ways of sin are paths of the destroyer, of the devil, whose name is a destroyer, who ruins souls by decoying them into the paths of sin. It concerns us all to keep out of the paths of the destroyer, for if we walk in those ways that lead to destruction, we must thank ourselves if destruction and misery be our portion at last. It is by the word of God, as our guide and rule, that we must keep out of the paths of the destroyer, by observing its directions and admonitions, 119. 9. If we carefully avoid all the paths of sin, it will be very comfortable in the reflection, when we are in trouble. Those that are, through grace going in God's paths, have need to pray, that their goings may be held up in those paths; for we stand no longer than he is pleased to hold us; we go no further than he is pleased to lead us, bear us up, and carry us. David had been kept in the way of his duty hitherto, and yet he does not think that that would be his security for the future, and therefore he prays, "Lord, still hold me up." Those that would proceed, and persevere in

the way of God, must, by faith and prayer, get daily fresh supplies of grace and strength from him.

Observe here what he expects and desires from God; Show thy marvellous loving-kindness. The word signifies, distinguishing favours. "Set apart thy loving-kindnesses for me, not common mercies, but be gracious to me, as thou usest to do to those who love thy name." Also, wonderful favours. Lord, testify thy favour to me in such a way, that I and others may wonder at it. God's loving-kindness is marvellous, for the freeness and the fulness of it. In some instances, it appears, in a special manner, marvellous, 118. 23, it will certainly appear so in the salvation of the saints, when Christ shall come to be glorified in the saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. In some of these things David spoke as a type of Christ, who alone was perfectly free from sin, and could say in the fullest sense, that a heart-searching God could find nothing wrong in him.

3. 4. "Thou hast tried my heart—visited me by night; hast proved me, but found no evil design; nor as to the deeds of men hath my mouth transgressed."—*Boothroyd*.

Ver. 8—15. Being compassed about with enemies, David prays to God to preserve him, through all their attempts, to the crown to which he was anointed. This prayer is a prediction of the preservation of Christ, through all the hardships and difficulties of his humiliation, to the glories and joys of his exalted state, and a pattern to christians to commit the keeping of their souls to God, trusting him to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom. He prays that he might be protected, ver. 8. Those who put themselves under God's protection, may in faith implore the benefit of it. He prays that God would keep him with as much care as a man keeps the apple of his eye, which nature has wonderfully fenced, and teaches us to guard, Zech. 2. 8. With as much tenderness as the hen gathers her young ones under her wings with: Christ uses the similitude, Matt. 23. 37. Perhaps it alludes to the wings of the cherubim shadowing the mercy-seat; Let me be taken under the protection of that glorious grace which is peculiar to God's Israel. What David here prays for, was performed to the Son of David, our Lord Jesus, of whom it is said, Isa. 49. 2, that God hid him in the shadow of his hand.

David further prays, Lord, keep me from the wicked, from men of the world. From being, and doing, like them. From being destroyed by them. Let them not have their will, let them not triumph over me.

He prays that all the designs of his enemies to bring him either into sin or into trouble, might be defeated, ver. 13. While Saul persecuted David, how often did he miss his prey, when he thought he had him sure! And how were Christ's enemies disappointed by his resurrection, who thought they had gained their point when they had put him to death!

Observe what David pleads, for the encouragement of his own faith and hope.

1. The malice and wickedness of his enemies. They are my deadly enemies; enemies against the soul, so the word is, ver. 9. David's enemies did what they could to drive him to sin, and drive him away from God, they bade him go serve other gods, 1 Sam. 26. 19; and therefore he had reason to pray against them. Note; Those are our worst enemies, and we ought so to account them, that are enemies to our souls. They are very secure and sensual, insolent and haughty, ver. 10. They make light of God, and set his judgments at defiance, 73. 7; Job 15. 27. They are restless and unwearied in their attempts. They have compassed us in our steps, they follow us, ver. 9, and take all advantages against us, set their eyes bowing down to the earth. Watchful and intent to do us mischief; they are down-looking, and never slip an opportunity of compassing their design. The ring-leader is in a special manner bloody and barbarous, ver. 12, therefore greedy of it. This is fitly applied to Saul, who sought David, 1 Sam. 24. 2; 26. 2, where lions used to lurk for their prey.

Christians cannot forget that they likewise have an adversary of the same nature and character; one ever seeking whom, and contriving how he may devour.—(32.)

2. The power God had over them, to control and restrain them. He pleads, Lord, they are thy sword; and will any father suffer his sword to be drawn against his own children? They are but the instruments, the trouble comes originally from God, to whose will we are bound to submit. This also is an encouragement to us to hope, both that their wrath shall praise him, and that the remainder thereof he will restrain. They are God's sword, which he can manage as he pleases, which can-

not move without him, and which he will sheathe when he has done his work with it. They are thy hand, by which thou dost chastise thy people, and make them feel thy displeasure. He therefore expects deliverance from God's hand, because from God's hand the trouble came. There is no flying from God's hand, but by flying to it. It is very comfortable, when we are in fear of the power of man, to see it dependent upon, and in subjection to the power of God: see Isa. 10. 6, 7, 15.

3. Their outward prosperity, ver. 14. They look upon the things of this world as the best things, and sufficient to make them happy; they choose them accordingly, place their happiness in them, and aim at them as their chief good; they rest satisfied with them, their souls take ease in them, and they look no further, nor are in any care to provide for another life. These things are their consolation, Luke 6. 24; their good things, Luke 16. 25; their reward, Matt. 20. 13. They have abundance of the world. The things of this world are called treasures, because they are so accounted; otherwise, to a soul, and in comparison with eternal blessings, they are but trash. They are hid in the several parts of the creation, and hid in the sovereign disposals of Providence. They are God's hid treasures, for the earth is his, and the fulness thereof, though the men of the world think it is their own, and forget God's property in it. They will not fill the belly, 1 Cor. 6. 13, they will not fill the soul, they are not bread for that, nor can they satisfy, Isa. 55. 2. They have numerous families, and a great deal to leave to them; but they must die, and leave their good things behind them, and go into another world, where they have no portion but darkness and despair. The most afflicted christian need not envy the most prosperous men of the world who have their portion in this life.

4. He pleads his own dependence upon God as his portion and happiness. Lord, teach us to choose the good part which shall never be taken from us. Clothed with Christ's righteousness, having a good heart and a good life, may we by faith behold God's face, and set him always before us; when we awake every morning, be satisfied with his likeness set before us in his word, and with his likeness stamped upon us by his renewing grace. Our experience of God's favour to us, and our conformity to him, should yield us more

satisfaction than they have, who are filled with the delights of sense. Happiness in the other world is prepared only for those that are justified and sanctified: they shall be put in possession of it when the soul awakes, at death, out of its slumber in the body, and when the body awakes, at the resurrection, out of its slumber in the grave. That blessedness will consist in the immediate beholding of God and his glory; the knowledge of God will there be perfected, and the enlarged understanding filled with it. Also in the participation of his likeness; our holiness will there be perfect. When he shall appear, we shall therefore be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And in a complete and full satisfaction resulting from all this. There is no satisfaction for a soul but in God, and in his face and likeness, his good will towards us, and his good work in us; even that satisfaction will not be perfect till we come to heaven.

Believers must follow the Saviour, and men of the same character will be his enemies as were theirs; but he was more hated and cruelly treated than any of his followers can be. They cannot pretend to sinless perfection in any part or action of their lives; but through his merits and grace, they may rejoice in the testimony of their conscience to their simplicity and godly sincerity. Their prayers, therefore, are not the language of dissembling lips, but the fervent desires of their hearts, and they may believe that he will appear in their behalf.

11. The allusion probably is to the huntsman tracing the foot mark of the animal he pursues.

PSALM XVIII.

This psalm we had in the history of David's life, 2 Sam. 22. Perhaps we have it here as delivered to the chief singer for the public service of the sanctuary, while there it stands as used in his private devotions. The variations are not material, and few need to be noted in this exposition. It is David's thanksgiving for the many deliverances God had wrought for him: these he desired always to preserve in his own memory, and to diffuse the knowledge of. (1.) He triumphs in God, ver. 1—3. He magnifies the deliverances God had wrought for him, ver. 4—19. (2.) He takes the comfort of his integrity which God had cleared up, ver. 20—28. (3.) He gives to God the glory of all his

achievements, ver. 29—42. He encourages himself with the expectation of what God would do for him and his, ver. 43—50.

David, in this psalm, as a type of Christ, and fellow partaker of the sufferings of Christ in his mystical members, and of deliverances and victories over his and their enemies, being now settled in the kingdom, praises God for his marvellous mercies; and as a type of Christ, he prophesies of the enlargement and stability of his own kingdom, and of Christ's kingdom among the Gentiles represented thereby.—(18.)

Ver. 1—19. David triumphs in God and his relation to him. The first words, I will love thee, O Lord, my strength, are here prefixed as the scope and contents of the whole. Love to God is the first and great commandment of the law, because it is the principle of all our acceptable praise and obedience: and this use we should make of all the mercies God bestows upon us, our hearts should thereby be enlarged in love to him. There is that in God, which is suited to all the exigencies and occasions of his people that trust in him. He is my rock, and strength, and fortress, ver. 2. I have found him so in the greatest dangers and difficulties. I have chosen him to be so, depending upon him alone to protect me. Those that truly love God, may thus triumph in him as theirs, and may with confidence call upon him, ver. 3, for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved, Acts 2. 21.

David sets himself to magnify the deliverances God had wrought for him, that he might be the more affected in his returns of praise. It is good for us to observe all the circumstances of a mercy, which magnify the power of God and his goodness to us in it. The more threatening the danger out of which we were delivered, the greater is the mercy. The more earnest we have been with God for deliverance, and the more direct answer it is to our prayers, the more we are obliged to be thankful. David was a praying man, and God was found a prayer-hearing God. If we pray as he did, we shall speed as he did.

God's manifestation of his presence is magnificently described, ver. 7—15. Little appeared of man, but much of God, in these deliverances. No opposition, no obstruction can be given to Him, who

rides upon the wings of the wind, who rides on the heavens, for the help of his people, and, in his excellency, on the skies. His glory is invisible, his counsels are unsearchable, and so, as to us, clouds and darkness are round about him; we know not the way that he takes, even when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy; but when his designs are secret, they are kind; for though he hide himself, he is the God of Israel, the Saviour. And, at his brightness, the thick clouds pass; comfort returns; the gloomy and threatening become serene and pleasant.

The first imagery employed, ver. 7, is from mount Sinai, and the circumstances that attended the delivery of the law from thence. The further effects of God's indignation are represented by those of fire, ver. 8, the most terrible of the created elements, consuming all before it. Storms and tempests in the element of air are instruments of the Divine displeasure, and therefore are also selected, ver. 9—11, as figures of it. The whole artillery of the regions of the air, ver. 12—14, is at God's command to be employed by him against his enemies, and is here magnificently described. Such is the voice, such are the arrows of the Lord Almighty, where-with he discomfith all who oppose the execution of his counsels, and obstruct the salvation of his chosen. The latter part, ver. 15, seems to allude to what passed at the Red Sea, when by the breath of God the waters were divided, the depths were discovered, and Israel was conducted in safety through them. It is not easy to accommodate to the history of the son of Jesse those awful, majestic, and stupendous images which are used through this whole description of the Divine manifestation. But however this be, every part of so solemn a scene of terrors, tells us "a greater than David is here," creation scarcely affords stronger colours to describe the appearance of Jehovah at the day of final redemption.—(32.)

God will not only deliver his people out of their troubles in due time, but he will sustain them and bear them up under their troubles, in the mean time. That which especially magnified the deliverance, was, that God's favour was the root and fountain of it, ver. 16—19. We owe our salvation, that great deliverance, to the delight God had in the Son of David, in whom he has declared himself to be well pleased.

Can we meditate on the sentiment of ver. 18, without directing one mournful thought to Gethsemane and Calvary? Can we forget that it was the hour of Christ's deepest calamity, when Judas betrayed, when his friends forsook, when the multitude derided him, and the smiles of his Father's love were intercepted, that then it was the powers of darkness prevented him? If we forget this, surely we cease to gaze on him as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; of whom it may be said, that the Father delighted in him. He was his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased.—(47.)

We may apply it to Christ the Son of David; the sorrows of death surrounded him, in his distress he prayed, Heb. 5. 7. God made the earth to shake and tremble, and the rocks to cleave, and brought him out, in his resurrection, into a large place, because he delighted in him and in his undertaking.

Ver. 20—28. Here David rejoices in the testimony of his conscience, that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom, 2 Cor. 1. 12. His deliverances were evidence of this; it was the great comfort of his deliverances. They that forsake the ways of the Lord, do, in effect, depart from their God. But though we are conscious to ourselves of many a stumble, and many a false step taken, yet it is not a wicked departure, from our God. He had kept his eye upon the rule of God's commands. He had kept himself from his iniquity. Constant care to abstain from that sin, whatever it be, which most easily besets us, is good evidence that we are upright before God.

In the events of David's life, his character had been grievously aspersed, and many things laid to his charge; but his conduct had been upright and conscientious to an uncommon degree. In all his persecutions by Saul he would not injure him, and embraced every occasion to serve the cause of Israel.

He takes occasion thence to lay down the rules of God's government and judgment, that we may know, not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him, ver. 25, 26. Those who show mercy to others, even they need mercy, and cannot depend upon the merit of their works of mercy, they shall find mercy with God, Matt. 5. 7. Those who are faithful to God shall find him all that

to them which he has promised to be. Those who serve God with a pure conscience, shall find that the words of the Lord are pure words, very sure to be depended on, and very sweet to be delighted in. Those who resist God, and walk contrary to him, shall find that he will resist them, and walk contrary to them, Lev. 26. 21—24. The gracious recompense which David spoke of may generally be expected by those who act conscientiously in the sight of God, from right motives.

Hence he speaks comfort to the humble; Thou wilt save the afflicted people. He speaks terror to the proud; Thou wilt bring down high looks. And he speaks encouragement to himself; Thou wilt light my candle; thou wilt revive and comfort my sorrowful spirit; thou wilt guide my way, and make it plain before me, that I may avoid the snares laid for me; thou wilt light my candle to work by, and give me an opportunity of serving thee, and the interests of thy kingdom among men. Let those that walk in darkness, and labour under many discouragements, encourage themselves; God himself will be a Light to them.

None of Adam's posterity are pure by nature; they are all defiled with sin; and though some are pure in their own eyes, they are far from being cleansed from their filthiness. Such only are pure who are sanctified by the Spirit of God, have clean hearts created in them, and whose hearts are purified by faith in the blood of Christ—who are justified by Christ's righteousness, and are washed from their sins in his blood; who in consequence of such grace, love, and pureness of heart, speak a pure language, hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, and with a pure conversation, and live soberly, righteously, and godly. This may likewise be understood of Christ, who, in his human nature, is pure from all sin, both original and actual. He indeed took upon him the sins of his people, bore them, and made satisfaction for them, and brought in everlasting righteousness; which being done, God has showed himself pure to Him, by justifying, acquitting, and discharging him from all such sins; by accepting His righteousness, and imputing it to those for whom He wrought it.—(27.)

Certain indeed it is that the expressions, considered as David's, must be confined to his steadfast adherence to the true worship in opposition to idolatry, or

to his innocency with regard to particular crimes falsely alleged against him. But these verses exactly and beautifully delineate that all-perfect righteousness wrought by the Redeemer.—(32.)

Ver. 29—50. When we praise God for one mercy, we must observe the many more, with which we have been compassed and followed all our days. Many things had contributed to David's advancement, and he owns the hand of God in them all, to teach us to do likewise.

In verse 32, and the following verses, the gifts of God to the spiritual warrior are enumerated, whereby he is armed and prepared for the battle, after the example of his victorious Leader. God invests him with strength, or what the apostle calls, the spirit of might in the inner man, Eph. 3. 16, as the loins of a soldier were braced by the military girdle. He removes every thing that may hinder his progress, making his way perfect. He endueth the affections, which are the feet of the soul, with vigour and agility, to run the way of his commandments. He communicates wisdom and power, instructing and enabling to overcome. The salvation of God is a defence against all temptations, to such as believe in it; the shield of faith, wherewith, says St. Paul, ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil. God had opened a free course for David, ver. 36, to victory and triumph, and had also endued him with strength to run that course, thus removing the effects of sin, which preclude the way to heaven, and deprive us of ability to travel in it.—(32.)

Here, ver. 37—45, David makes mention of the victories which God gave him, as a type of Christ, over all his enemies. It was revealed to him, that as he had, so Christ should have many enemies, should prevail over them, and make his followers victorious over them all. That he should pursue his and their enemies in every age, and not turn again till they are consumed; till he hath subdued them all, taken them captives, and destroyed them. In some passages of severe justice which David executed against his enemies, he sets forth the certain destruction of Christ's enemies. Whence learn that whosoever looks for release out of trouble, and not through Christ, shall have no release at all. The prayer put up without reconciliation made through Christ shall be rejected. If men

pursued by Christ for their enmity against him, shall not, under the rod at least, turn to him, there remaineth nothing for them but that they be utterly destroyed, beaten small as the dust.—(18.)

David looks up, with humble and reverent adorations of the Divine glory and perfection; God had, by his providence, magnified him, he endeavours, with his praises, to magnify God, to bless him and exalt him, ver. 46. The gods of the heathen were dead gods; the best friends we have among men, are dying friends; but God lives for ever, and will not fail those that trust in him; because he lives, they shall live also, for he is their Life. He looks to Him as a finishing God; As for God, he is not only perfect himself, but his way is perfect, ver. 30. There is no fault to be found with what he does, Eccl. 3. 14. What he undertakes, he will go through with; what God begins, he is able to finish. As a faithful God; The word of the Lord is tried. I have tried it, says David, and it has not failed me. All the saints, in all ages, have tried it, and it never failed any that trusted in it. It is tried as silver is tried, refined from all such mixture and alloy as lessen the value of men's words. As the Protector and Defender of his people. David had found him so; He is the God of my salvation, ver. 46, by whose power and grace I am, and hope to be saved; but not of mine only, he is a Buckler to all those that trust in him, ver. 30; he shelters and protects them all, is both able and ready to do so. As one unequalled in all this, ver. 31. There is a God, and who is God, save Jehovah? God is a Rock, for the support and shelter of his faithful worshippers; and who is a Rock, save our God? Thus he not only gives glory to God, but encourages his own faith in him. Note; Whoever pretend to make us happy, there is no Rock, save our God; none else that we can depend upon.

David looks forward, with a believing hope that God would still do him good. He promises himself that his enemies should be completely subdued, that his government should be extensive, so that people whom he had not known, should serve him, ver. 43. That his conquests should be easy; As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me, ver. 44. And that his enemies should be convinced that it was to no purpose to oppose him; even those that are retired to their fastnesses,

shall not trust to them, but be afraid, having seen so much of David's wisdom, courage, and success.

Here also, ver. 44, is intimated the readiness with which the Gentiles should flow into the church, upon the preaching of the gospel to them, when the Jews, after having so long and so often heard it, had nailed Christ to the cross, and had driven the apostles from among them. Nations, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, Eph. 2. 12, either cordially submitted to the sceptre of Christ, or yielded a feigned submission, for so the word rendered "fade away" sometimes signifies. They shall fall at the sound of my name and victories, or rather, "They shall come trembling from their strong holds," as places not able to protect them, and therefore they will sue for peace. Such seems to be the import of ver. 44, 45, which therefore denote the conquest of Messiah to have been every way complete. Accordingly, in the latter part of the psalm, the church, through Christ her Head, blesses Jehovah.—(32.)

In David the type, we behold Jesus our Redeemer, conflicting with enemies, compassed with sorrows, and with floods of ungodly men, enduring not only the pains of death, but the wrath of God for us: yet calling upon the Father with strong cries and tears; rescued from the grave with convulsions of nature; advanced to the mediatorial throne, and made Head of the heathen, as a recompense of his most perfect obedience even unto death; executing vengeance on the Jewish nation, beating them as small as the dust before the wind, and casting them out, as the dirt in the streets; and proceeding either to reconcile, or to put under his feet all other enemies, till death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed. In the full assurance of these truths, and expectation of his appearing and his glory, we should hasten to submit willingly to his authority, and to embrace his salvation: we should trust in his merits, rejoice in his triumphs, and imitate his example. We too should love the Lord our strength, and our salvation; we should call on him in every trouble, and praise him for every deliverance; we should aim to walk with him in all righteousness and true holiness, approving our hearts unto him, and keeping ourselves from our own iniquities. May he arm us for, and help us in every conflict: may

we make no league with, nor give any quarter to any lust. By his strength may we leap over every interposing wall of difficulty; by his light may we pass through every dark valley; till at length we share the Saviour's resurrection, and ascension into heaven; for if we belong to him, he conquers and reigns for us, and we shall conquer and reign through him; and partake of the mercy of our anointed King, which is entailed on all his seed for evermore. Amen.

34. "And maketh my arms like a bow of brass."—*Boothroyd*. The ancients had a method of hardening brass; it is not probable that the art of making steel was then known.

49. The manner in which St. Paul cites this verse, Rom. 15. 9. is remarkable. It is by the apostle produced as a proof that the Gentiles were one day to glorify God, for the mercy vouchsafed them by Jesus Christ. But according to the letter of the passage, David only says he will give thanks unto God among the heathen, on account of his own deliverance and exaltation to the throne of Israel; for upon that occasion we know that he composed and sung the psalm. The citation of St. Paul therefore cannot be to the purpose for which it is brought, unless God be glorified in it for the victory and enthronization of Christ, as well as those of David; and this cannot be unless the words which literally celebrate the one, prophetically celebrate the other; unless David be a figure of Christ, and speak in his person and in that of his body the church.—*Bishop Burne*. This verse is applied, in Rom. 15. 9, to the calling of the Gentiles unto the faith of Christ, and praise unto God *therefore*. By which we are taught that of Christ and his kingdom this psalm is chiefly intended.—*Ainsworth*.

(See also the remarks on 2 Sam. 22.)

PSALM XIX.

In this psalm we have (1.) A sweet contemplation of the glory of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, shining in the works of creation, ver. 1-6. (2.) The glory of God's holiness and rich grace, shining through his word and ordinances in his church, whereof the psalmist having proof, prays to have the right use and benefit, ver. 7-14.—(18.)

Ver. 1-6. The heavens so declare the glory of God, and proclaim his wisdom, power, and goodness, that atheists, infidels, and all ungodly men are left without excuse. All may learn profitable lessons from these constant teachers, who instruct by day and night, in every land, and men of every tongue: while other teachers are confined to some particular district, these preach to the whole human race. They show the folly of idolaters also, and

the vanity of their imaginations, who gave that glory to the lights of heaven, which those very lights directed them to give to God only, the Father of lights. Observe,

They are many ways useful and serviceable to us, but in nothing so much as in that they declare the glory of God, ver. 1. They speak themselves to be God's handiworks; for they could not exist from eternity; all succession and motion must have had a beginning; they could not make themselves, that is a contradiction; they must have a Creator, who can be no other than an eternal mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good. From the excellence of the work, we may easily infer the infinite perfection of its great Author. Their influence upon this earth shows his dominion and providence, and universal beneficence: and all things concerning them declare his Almighty power by which they were at first made, and continue to this day.

The heavens and the firmament, the vast expanse, the planets, and fixed stars, are some of those things which notify this.

The constant and regular succession of day and night, ver. 2, speaks the glory of that God who first divided between the light and the darkness, and has, from the beginning to this day, preserved that established order, according to his covenant with Noah, Gen. 8. 22; to which covenant of providence, the covenant of grace is compared for its stability, Jer. 33. 20; 31. 35. The counterchanging of day and night is a great instance of the power of God, and calls us to observe, that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in that of providence, he forms the light, and creates the darkness, Isa. 45. 7, and sets the one against the other.

The light and influence of the sun, in a special manner, declare the glory of God. This lower world would be all dungeon, and all desert, without it. Every morning the sun, as it were, issues forth, in all the vigour, alacrity, and beautiful adorning with which a bridegroom would go forth to his marriage, and rejoices like an active racer, when about to start for the prize. Thus he daily diffuses light, warmth, and fertility through the earth. The sun in the firmament may be considered as an emblem of the Sun of righteousness, the Bridegroom of the church, and the Light of the world, diffusing Divine light and salvation by his gospel to the nations of the earth. He

delighteth to rejoice and bless his church, which, as a bridegroom, he hath espoused to himself; and his course will be unwearied as that of the sun, till the whole earth be filled with his light and salvation. Let us pray for the time when He shall enlighten, cheer, and make fruitful, every nation on earth, with that blessed salvation.

This declaration of the glory of God is made to all parts of the world. Their words to the end of the world, proclaim the eternal power of the God of nature, ver. 4. The apostle uses this as a reason why the Jews should not be angry for the preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, because God had already made himself known to the Gentile world by the works of creation, and left not himself without witness among them, Rom. 10. 18: so that they were without excuse, if they were idolaters, Rom. 1. 20, 21.

They have no speech or language, so some read it, and yet their voice is heard. All people may hear these preachers speak to them, in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God.

Let us give God the glory of all the comfort and benefit we have by the lights of heaven, still looking above and beyond them to the Sun of righteousness.

5. An eastern bridegroom.

6. Here, and elsewhere in scripture, the motions of the heavenly bodies are spoken of as they appear to us, not according to the discoveries of science.

Ver. 7—14. God's glory, that is, his goodness to man, appears in the works of creation, but much more in and by Divine revelation. The holy scripture is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe, or the light of the sun. The discoveries made of God by his works, might have served, if man had retained his integrity; but to recover him out of his fallen state, another course must be taken; that must be done by the word of God. And here,

The psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses of the word of God, in six sentences, ver. 7—9. in each of which the name Jehovah is repeated; and no vain repetition, for the law has its authority and all its excellence from the Law-maker. Here are six several titles of the word of God, to take in the whole of Divine revelation, precepts, and promises, and especially the law upon the minds of men, which show what

it is designed for, what use we are to make of it, and how wonderful the efficacy of Divine grace is working by it.

The word translated law, may be rendered doctrine, and be understood as a general name for Divine revelation. The whole is *perfect*; its tendency is to convert the soul from sin and the world, unto God and holiness. It shows us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God, and the indispensable necessity of our return to him. This testimony is *sure*, entirely to be depended on; the ignorant and unlearned, believing what God saith, become wise unto salvation, while human reasonings issue in error and uncertainty. It is a sure discovery of Divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure fountain of living comforts, and a sure foundation of lasting hopes.

The statutes of the Lord are *right*. All God's precepts, concerning all things, are right, 119. 128, just as they should be; and, because they are right, they rejoice the heart. The law, as we see it in Christ, gives cause for joy; and, when it is written in our hearts, it lays a foundation for lasting joy, by restoring us to our right mind.

The commandments of the Lord are *pure*, holy, just, and good. By them we are enlightened to perceive what we ought to be, and do; thus we discover our need of a Saviour; and then learn how to glorify him, and adorn his gospel. It is the ordinary means which the Spirit uses in enlightening the eyes; it brings us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and directs us in the way of duty.

The fear of the Lord, that is true religion and godliness, prescribed in the word, reigning in the heart, and practised in the life, is *clean*, it will cleanse our way, 119. 9. And it *endureth for ever*; it is of perpetual obligation, and can never be repealed; the ceremonial law is long since done away, but the law concerning the fear of God, is ever the same. Time will not alter moral good and evil.

The judgments of the Lord, his precepts, which are framed in infinite wisdom, are *true*; they are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths; they are *righteous*, all agreeable to natural equity; and they are so *altogether*; there is no unrighteousness in any of them. His warnings and threatenings, executed upon sinners, are all consistent with truth and justice, and of a salutary tendency.

He expresses the great value he had for the word of God, and the great advantage he had, and hoped to have from it, ver. 10, 11. The whole of the word of God, as David had it, was in his judgment more valuable, because more useful to him than gold, than fine gold, than much fine gold; and he found it more pleasant than honey to his taste.

See how highly he prized the commandments of God. It is the character of all good people, that they prefer their religion and the word of God, far before all the wealth of the world. Gold is of the earth, earthly; but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body, and the concerns of time; but grace is for the soul, and the concerns of eternity. The word of God, received by faith, is sweet to the soul, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. The pleasures of sense are the delight of brutes, and therefore debase the soul of man; the pleasures of religion are the delight of angels, and exalt the soul. The pleasures of sense are deceitful, will soon surfeit, and yet never satisfy; but those of religion are substantial and satisfying, and there is no danger of exceeding in them.

He loved the scriptures because they warned him to avoid sins and temptations.

God's word warns the wicked not to go on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way. All that are God's servants, take this warning.

There is a reward, not only *after* keeping, but *in* keeping, God's commandments; a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Religion is health and honour, it is peace and pleasure; it will make our comforts sweet, and our crosses easy, life truly valuable, and death itself truly desirable.

David's thoughts returned to himself, ver. 12—14. Viewed by the word of God, his errors or deviations appeared innumerable, and he desired not only to be pardoned and cleansed from those sins which he had discovered and confessed, but from those he had forgotten or overlooked. From the extent and strictness and spiritual nature of the Divine law, he learns that his sins are so many, that he cannot understand the number of them; and so exceeding sinful, that he cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them. The treachery of his heart made him fear being drawn into deliberate and presumptuous sins. This made him

servently pray to be kept back by Divine grace from such dreadful crimes and consequences. All the discoveries of sin made us by the law, should drive us to the throne of grace, there to pray, as David does here. He prays to be preserved upright and innocent from the great offence of idolatry or apostasy, and that the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart might, by Divine grace, obtain acceptance in His sight who was his strength and his Redeemer. So that his dependence was the same with that of every christian who says, "Surely in the Lord Jesus have I righteousness and strength."

The more any man studies and understands the holy scriptures, the more deeply will he be convinced of his own sinfulness in thought, word, and deed. This will cause him to cast himself unreservedly on the Lord's mercy and grace, for deliverance from the sins which hitherto have been unnoticed by himself. He will grow more watchful of his own heart, lest he should be drawn into presumptuous sins; for all that truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, are careful not to relapse into sin, nor to return again to folly. And while he longs more and more that his thoughts, words, and works may be acceptable to the Lord, he will feel more sensibly, and more feel his own weakness and insufficiency for any good thing, and learn to depend more entirely upon the Lord Jesus, as made of God unto him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; rejoicing and glorying in Him alone.

No prayer can be acceptable before God which is not offered in the strength of our Redeemer or Divine Kinsman, through him who took our nature upon him, that he might redeem us unto God, and restore the long lost inheritance.—(11.)

May our hearts be much affected with the excellence of the word of God; much affected with the evil of sin, the danger we are in of it, and the danger we are in by it, and let us earnestly seek for help from Heaven against it.

PSALM XX.

This psalm is a prayer for the kings of Israel, but with an especial relation to Christ, the King of Israel, in respect of whom, (1.) This prayer is a prophecy, and a form of blessing of Christ, and praying for his kingdom, ver. 1—5. After which, (2.) The confidence of the church is set forth,

and its glorying in God over its enemies, with dependence on God for salvation in all difficulties, ver. 6—9.—(18.)

David was a type of Christ in his conflicts and victories, and it may be applied as a prophecy of, and prayer for his coming, the completion of his work, and the establishment of his kingdom.

Ver. 1—5. Observe here what they are taught to ask of God for the king.

1. That God would answer his prayers. Even the greatest of men may be much in trouble. Neither the crown on his head, nor the grace in his heart, would exempt him from trouble. Even the greatest of men must be much in prayer. Let none expect benefit by the prayers of the church, or of their friends, who are capable of praying for themselves, and yet neglect it.

2. That God would protect his person, and preserve his life in the perils of war. Let God by his providence keep thee safe, even the God who preserved Jacob in the days of his trouble. Let God by his grace keep thee easy from the fear of evil.

3. That God would enable him to go on in his undertakings for the public good. That he would help him, in performance of the promises, and in answer to the prayers made in the sanctuary. Mercies out of the sanctuary are the sweetest mercies, such as are the tokens of God's peculiar love; the blessing of God, even our own God. Strength out of Zion is spiritual strength, strength in the soul, in the inward man, and that we should most desire both for ourselves and others, in services and sufferings.

4. That God would testify his gracious acceptance of the sacrifices he offered with his prayers, according to the law, before he went out upon his expeditions, ver. 3. All our help cometh out of Zion, from the mercy-seat, and through the accepted sacrifice of our Emmanuel, which the burnt-offerings under the law shadowed forth. We may know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by his Spirit he kindles in our souls a holy fire of pious and Divine affection, and with that makes our hearts burn within us.

5. That God would crown his enterprises with success, ver. 4. As far as our desires are spiritual, and our counsels holy, we may hope to have them fulfilled; but it would be ruinous to have our carnal inclinations indulged. Our first step to victory in our spiritual warfare is to re-

nounce all carnal confidences, and to trust only in the mercy and grace of our God. Thus we shall arise from our depth of misery and be established, while all who trust in themselves will soon be brought down. Christ is to us the salvation of God, and under his command we fight against the enemies of our souls.

Observe what confidence they had of an answer of peace to these petitions, ver.

5. In thy salvation, O God, in thy power and promise to save, will we rejoice; that we depend upon now, and we shall have occasion greatly to rejoice in. Those that have their eye still upon the salvation of the Lord, shall have their hearts filled with the joy of that salvation.

The joy of the church is in the salvation of Christ, and the joy of every individual is in the application of that salvation to himself and all around.—(32.)

These prayers for David are prophecies concerning Christ the Son of David, and in Him they were abundantly answered. He undertook the work of our redemption, and made war upon the powers of darkness. In the day of trouble, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, the Lord heard him in that he feared, Heb. 5. 7, sent him help out of the sanctuary, sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him; when he made his soul an offering for sin, accepted his burnt-sacrifice, turned it to ashes; the fire that should have fastened upon the sinner, fastening upon the sacrifice, with which God was well pleased. And he granted him according to his own heart, made him to see of the travail of his soul to his satisfaction, fulfilled all his petitions for himself and us; for Him the Father heareth always, and his intercession is ever prevailing.

Ver. 6—9. David triumphs in the interest he had in the prayers of good people, ver. 6. Happy is the people whose rulers are influenced by the faith and fear of God, aiming at his glory and the public good. The Lord from heaven will save with the strength of his right hand such as thus trust in him.

His people triumph in God, and his revelation of himself to them, by which they distinguish themselves from those that live without God in the world. The children of this world trust in second causes, and think all is well, if those do but smile upon them; but we will remember and rely upon the name of the Lord

our God; that is, all that whereby he makes himself known; this we will remember, and upon every remembrance of it will be encouraged. Those who make God and his name their praise, may make God and his name their trust. See the different beginning and issue of their confidences.

This was eminently the case when the pride and power of Jewish infidelity and Pagan idolatry fell before the sermons and lives of the humble believers in Jesus. This is the case in every conflict with our spiritual enemies, when we engage them in the name, the spirit, and the power of Christ; and this will be the case at the last day, when the world, with the prince of it, shall be brought down and fall; but believers, risen from the dead through the resurrection of the Lord, shall stand, and sing his praises in heaven.—(32.)

They conclude their prayer for the king with, Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord, ver. 9. As we read this verse it may be taken as a prayer that God would not only bless the king, but that he would make him a blessing to them; "Let the king hear us when we call to him for justice and mercy." Those that would have good of their magistrates must thus pray for them; for they, as all other creatures, are that to us which God makes them to be. Or, it may refer to the Messiah, that King, that King of kings; let Him hear us when we call; let him come to us, according to the promise, in the time appointed; let him receive all our petitions, and present them to his Father.

This kingdom hath been set up, and we are called to partake of its blessings. Let us constantly render thanksgivings for these benefits. In his salvation let us rejoice; under him let us enlist, and set up our banners in the name of the Lord our God, assured that by the saving strength of his right hand we shall be conquerors over every enemy.

We should encourage ourselves to trust in God, and stir up ourselves to pray earnestly, as we are in duty bound, for those in authority over us, that, under them, we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. ✕

PSALM XXI.

As the foregoing psalm was a prayer for the king, that God would protect and prosper him; so this is a thanksgiving

for the success God had granted. The people are here taught, (1.) To congratulate him on his victories, and the honour he had achieved, ver. 1—6. (2.) To confide in the power of God for completing the ruin of the enemies of his kingdom, ver. 7—13. Several circumstances in this psalm have reference to the history of David; but the whole seems more intended for Christ and his kingdom.

Ver. 1—6. They here congratulate the king on his joys, and concur with him in them, ver. 1. Happy the people whose king makes God's strength his confidence, and God's salvation his joy; that is pleased with all the advancements of God's kingdom, and trusts God to support him in all he does for the service of it. Our Lord Jesus, in his great undertaking, relied upon help from Heaven, and pleased himself with the prospect of that great salvation which he was thereby to work out.

They give God all the praise of those things, which were the matter of their king's rejoicing.

1. That God had heard his prayers, ver. 2. There is no prayer accepted but what is the heart's desire. God's gracious returns of prayer do, in a special manner, require our humble returns of praise. When God gives to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, gives him to see his seed, and accepts his intercession for all believers, he gives him his heart's desire.

2. That God had much outdone his expectations, ver. 3. All our blessings are blessings of goodness, and are owing, not at all to any merit of ours, but only to God's goodness. But when God's blessings come sooner, and prove richer than we imagine; when they are given before we prayed for them, before we were ready for them, nay, when we feared the contrary; then it may be truly said that he prevented, or went before us, with them. Nothing indeed prevented Christ, but to mankind never was any favour more preventing than our redemption by Christ, and all the blessed fruits of his mediation.

3. That God had advanced him to the highest honour and the most extensive power. Crowns are at God's disposal; no head wears them but God sets them there, whether in judgment to the land, or for mercy, the event will show. On the head of Christ God never set a crown of gold, but of thorns first, and then of glory.

4. That God had assured him of the

perpetuity of his kingdom, and therein had done more for him than he was able either to ask or think, ver. 4. When he asked his life of thee, thou not only gavest him that, but withal gavest him length of days for ever and ever; didst not only prolong his life far beyond his expectation, but assure him of a blessed immortality in a future state, and of the continuance of his kingdom in the Messiah. See how God's grants often exceed our petitions and hopes; and infer thence, how rich he is in mercy to those that call upon him. See also, and rejoice in the length of the days of Christ's kingdom. He was dead indeed, that we might live through him; but he is alive, and lives for evermore, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; and because he thus lives, we shall thus live also.

5. That God had advanced him to the highest honour and dignity, ver. 5. The glory which every good man is ambitious of, is to see the salvation of the Lord. Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him, as a burden which he must bear, as a charge which he must account for. Jesus Christ received from God the Father honour and glory, 2 Pet. 1. 17, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were, John 17. 5. On him is laid the charge of universal government, and to him all power in heaven and earth is committed.

6. That God had given him the satisfaction of being the channel of all bliss to mankind, ver. 6. Thou hast set him to be blessings for ever, (so the margin;) thou hast made him to be a universal, everlasting blessing to the world, in whom the families of the earth are, and shall be blessed; and so thou hast made him exceeding glad with the countenance thou hast given to his undertaking, and to him in the prosecution of it. See how the Spirit of prophecy gradually rises here to that which is peculiar to Christ; for none besides is blessed for ever, much less a blessing for ever, as the expression denotes: and of him it is said, that God made him full of joy with his countenance.

3. To prevent, where used in the English version, signifies literally, "to go before."

Ver. 7—13. The psalmist, having taught his people to look back with joy and praise on what God had done for him and them, here teaches them to look forward with faith, and hope, and prayer upon what God would further do for them.

The king rejoices in God, ver. 1, and therefore we will be thankful; the king trusteth in God, ver. 7, therefore will we be encouraged. The joy and confidence of Christ our King, is the ground of all our joy and confidence.

1. They are confident of the stability of David's kingdom; Through the mercy of the Most High, and not through his own merit or strength, he shall not be moved. The mercy of the Most High, the Divine goodness, power, and dominion, is enough to secure our happiness, and therefore our trust in that mercy should be enough to silence all our fears. God being at Christ's right hand in his sufferings, 16. 8, and he being at God's right hand in his glory, we may be sure he shall not, he cannot be moved.

2. They are confident of the destruction of the enemies of David's kingdom. The success with which God had blessed David was an earnest of the rest which God would give him from all his enemies round about; and a type of the total overthrow of all Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them. Observe the description of his enemies. They are such as hate him, ver. 8. They hated David, because God had set him apart for himself; hated Christ, because they hated the light; but both were hated without any just cause, and in both God was hated, John 15. 23, 25. Also the designs of his enemies, ver. 11; they pretended to fight against David, but their enmity was against God. What is devised and designed against religion, and against the instruments God raises up to support and advance it, God takes as devised and designed against himself, and will so reckon for it. Observe also their disappointment—they devise what they are not able to perform, ver. 11. Their malice is impotent, and they imagine a vain thing.

See the discovery of them, ver. 8. Thy hand shall find them out, though ever so artfully disguised; though mingled with faithful subjects, and hardly to be distinguished from them; though flying from justice, yet thy hand shall find them out, wherever they are. There is no escaping God's avenging eye, no going out of the reach of his hand; rocks and mountains will be no better shelter at last, than fig-leaves were at first. Their destruction will be utter destruction, Luke 19. 27; ver. 9. Hell, the portion of all Christ's enemies, is complete misery both of body

and soul. Their fruit and their seed shall be destroyed, ver. 10. The enemies of God's kingdom, in every age, shall fall under the same doom. The arrows of God's wrath shall confound them, and put them to flight, ver. 12. That will be the lot of daring enemies who face God. The fire of God's wrath will consume them, ver. 9; he shall make them as a fiery oven or furnace to themselves; they shall be their own tormentors, the reflections and terrors of their own consciences will be their hell. Those who might have had Christ to ride and save them, but rejected him and fought against him, shall find that even the remembrance of it will be a worm that dies not.

3. In this confidence they beg of God that he would still appear for his anointed, ver. 13, by the immediate operations of his power as Lord of hosts, and Father of spirits. Hereby he could exalt himself, and glorify his own name. We have but little strength, and are not so active for thee as we should be, which is our shame; Lord, take the work into thine own hands, do it without us, and it will be thy glory. Hereupon, they would exalt him; So will we sing, and praise thy power, the more triumphantly.

He maketh sinners willing by his grace, receives them to his favour, and delivers them from the wrath to come. May he exalt himself, by his all-powerful grace, in our hearts, destroying all the strong holds of sin and Satan; so will we sing and praise his power, as anticipating the joy and songs of the redeemed, when they shall see the last enemy put under the Redeemer's feet.

If David rejoiced greatly in the honours conferred on him as king of Israel, what is the joy of the Redeemer in his resurrection and exaltation! How great should be our joy and praise to behold our Brother and Friend upon the throne, and for all the blessings we may expect from him! May we share the benefit of his effectual intercession, and form our prayers upon the same model for ourselves and others. Words cannot express Christ's glory in God's salvation; or the adoration rendered to him by angels and saints above, on account of his honour as Mediator; yet he chiefly delights in his exalted state, as enabling him to confer an exceeding and eternal weight of glory on poor sinners, who are here taught to love and trust in him. The love wherewith

the Father hath loved him, resteth upon all his true disciples, John 17. 26.

PSALM XXII.

The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testifies in this psalm, clearly and fully, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. 1. 11: of him, no doubt, David here speaks, and not of himself, or any other man. Much of it is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament; all of it may be applied to him, and some of it must be understood of him only. In this psalm David speaks of the humiliation of Christ, ver. 1—21, where as a type of Christ, he complains of the very calamitous condition he was in, upon many accounts. (1.) He complains, ver. 1, 2, but comforts himself, ver. 3—5; complains again, ver. 6—8, but comforts himself again, ver. 9, 10. (2.) He complains, and mixes prayers with his complaints; complains of the power and rage of his enemies, ver. 12, 13, 16, 18; of his own bodily weakness and decay, ver. 14, 15, 17. But prays that God would not be far from him, ver. 11, 19. That he would save and deliver him, ver. 19—21. (3.) He speaks also of the exaltation of Christ. That his undertaking should be for the glory of God, ver. 22—25, for the salvation and joy of his people, ver. 26—29, and for the perpetuating of his own kingdom, ver. 30, 31.

Aijeleth Shahar signifies the hind of the morning. It seems to point out Christ as marked by Satan from his birth for persecution, as the hind in the morning for the chase; and so hunted down by his enemies, until surrounded by them when he hung upon the cross, as dogs surround the weary hart. Of this the persecutions of David in his earlier years were a type.

Ver. 1—10. We have a sorrowful complaint of God's withdrawals, ver. 1, 2. This may be applied to any child of God, in the want of the tokens of his favour, pressed down, overwhelmed with grief and terror, crying earnestly for relief, and, in this case, apprehending himself forsaken of God; unheard, yet continuing to cry day and night to him, and earnestly desiring his gracious returns. Spiritual desertions are the saints' sorest afflictions; when their communion with God is interrupted, and the terrors of God are set in array against them, how sad their spirits,

and how sapless all their comforts! But even their complaint of these burdens is a sign of spiritual life, and spiritual senses exercised. To cry out, "My God, why am I sick? why am I poor?" gives cause to suspect discontent and worldliness. But, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" is the language of a heart binding up its happiness in God's favour. When we want the faith of assurance, we must live by a faith of adherence; however it be, yet God is good, and he is mine; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; though he do not answer me immediately, I will continue praying and waiting; though he be silent, I will not be silent.

But it must be applied to Christ. In the first words of this complaint, he poured out his soul before God when he was upon the cross, Matt. 27. 46. Christ, in his sufferings, cried earnestly to his Father, for his favour and presence with him; he cried in the day-time upon the cross, and in the night-season when he was in his agony in the garden; he offered up strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save him, and with some fear too, Heb. 5. 7. Yet God forsook him, was far from helping him; and this he complained of more than of all his other sufferings.

Without any sin of his own, but bearing our sins in their guilt and punishment, he was wholly deprived of all sensible comfort, and felt that horror in his soul which is the effect of the Divine wrath. The powers of darkness were permitted to assail him with every dreadful temptation; wicked men exercised their cruelty against him without restraint; the God and Father seemed to have forsaken him, and to be regardless of his agonies and prayers; yet still He used the language of strong faith, conflicting with, and prevailing against all despondency and impatience. Being truly man, Christ felt natural reluctance to pass through such sorrows, yet his zeal and love prevailed.

Encouragement is taken, in reference hereunto, ver. 3—5. Though God did not hear him, did not help him; though thou dost not immediately come in to the relief of thine afflicted people, yet thou lovest them, art true to thy covenant with them, and dost not countenance the iniquity of their persecutors, Hab. 1. 13. Christ declared the holiness of God, his heavenly Father, in his sharpest sufferings; nay, declared them to be a proof of it, for which he would be continually

praised by his Israel, more than for all the other deliverances they had received in answer to faith and prayer. He considered them all as types and earnest of his own deliverance, when his expiation was finished. Never any that hoped in thee, were made ashamed of their hope; never any that sought thee, sought thee in vain. And thou art still the same in thyself, and the same to thy people, that ever thou wast. He knew he also should not be confounded, Isa. 50. 7.

Here is complaint of the contempt and reproach of men. This complaint is by no means so bitter as that before of God's withdrawals, but it touches the soul in a very tender part, ver. 6—8. It was great condescension that Christ became man, that is, and will be the wonder of angels; yet, as if it were too much, too great, to be a man, he becomes a worm, and no man. The Saviour here spoke of the abject state to which he was reduced. The history of Christ's sufferings is a perfect comment on this part of the prophecy. These very gestures were used by those that reviled him, Matt. 27. 39; nay they used the very words, not aware that they had been allotted to them so many ages before.

Encouragement is taken as to this also, ver. 9, 10. David and other good men have often encouraged themselves that God was not only the God of their fathers, but the God of their infancy. He that did so well for us in that helpless, useless state, will not leave us, when he has reared us to some capacity of serving him. See the early instances of God's providential care. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, over whose incarnation and birth the Divine Providence watched with peculiar care, and the remembrance of this comforted him in his sufferings.

Ver. 11—21. In these verses, we have Christ suffering, and Christ praying; by which we are directed to look for crosses, and to look up to God under them. David was often in trouble, and beset with enemies; but many of the particulars here specified, are such as were never true of David, and therefore must be appropriated to Christ in the depth of his humiliation.

He is here deserted by his friends; and there is none to help, ver. 11. He trod the wine-press alone; for all his disciples forsook him, and fled. He is here insulted and surrounded by enemies; for

their strength and fury compared to bulls, strong bulls of Bashan, ver. 12; such were the chief-priests and elders that persecuted Christ; and others of a lower rank, who are compared to dogs, ver. 16, unwearied in running him down. There was an assembly of the wicked plotting against him, ver. 16. Many, and those of different interests, agreed to compass him.

The very manner of Christ's death is described, though never in use among the Jews; They pierced my hands and my feet, ver. 16, which were nailed to the accursed tree, and the whole body left so to hang, the effect of which must needs be the most exquisite pain and torture. There is no one passage in all the Old Testament, which the Jews have so industriously corrupted as this, because it is such an eminent prediction of the death of Christ, and was so exactly fulfilled.

He is here dying in pain and anguish, ver. 14, 15, because he was to satisfy for sin, which brought in pain, and for which we must otherwise have lain in everlasting anguish. Here is the dissolution of the whole frame of his body; poured out like water, weak as water, and yielding to the power of death, emptying himself of all the supports of human nature. The dislocation of his bones; care was taken that not one of them should be broken, John 19. 36, but they were all out of joint by the violent stretching of his body upon the cross. His heart is like wax, melted to receive the impressions of God's wrath against the sins he undertook to satisfy for; melting away like the vitals of a dying man: as this satisfied for the hardness of our hearts, so the consideration of it should help to soften them. The failing of his natural force; being wasted by the fire of Divine wrath preying upon his spirits. Who then can stand before God's anger? Or who knows the power of it? His giving up the ghost, for nothing less would satisfy Divine justice. The life of the sinner was forfeited, and therefore the life of the sacrifice must be the ransom for it. He was stripped; the shame of nakedness was the immediate consequence of sin; our Lord Jesus was stripped when he was crucified, that he might clothe us with the robe of his righteousness. His blessed body was emaciated with labour, grief, and fasting, during the whole course of his ministry, ver. 17. Or, his bones might be numbered, because his body was distended upon the cross, distorted, and

having no flesh to cover them. They part my garments among them, ver. 18, to every soldier a part, and upon my vesture, the seamless coat, do they cast lots. This very circumstance was exactly fulfilled, John 19. 23, 24. Thus it was written, and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer. Let all this confirm our faith in him as the true Messiah, and excite our love to him as the best of Friends, who loved us, and suffered all this for us.

Here is Christ praying, and with that supporting himself under the burden of his sufferings; Christ, in his agony, prayed, prayed earnestly, prayed that the cup might pass from him; when the prince of this world with his terrors set upon him, as a roaring lion, he fell upon the ground, and prayed. And of that David's praying here was a type. He calls God his strength, ver. 19. When we cannot rejoice in God as our song, yet let us stay ourselves upon him as our strength; and take the comfort of spiritual supports, when we cannot have spiritual delights. The nearness of trouble should quicken us to draw near to God; then we may hope that he will draw near to us. He prays that God would help him, and make haste to help him; that he might neither shrink from his undertaking, nor sink under it. And the Father heard him in that he feared, Heb. 5. 7; and enabled him to go through with his work. Observe what he is in care for, ver. 20, 21. The safety of my soul, my darling, let that be redeemed from the power of the grave, 49. 15. Father, into thy hands I commit that. The psalmist here calls his soul his darling, his only one, so the word is. Or, "my united one," some consider it means the human nature of Christ as united to the Deity.

Observe from what he prays to be delivered—from the Divine wrath. God's anger was the wormwood and gall in the bitter cup put into his hands. Save me from the power of the dog, and from the lion's mouth. This seems to mean Satan, that old enemy who bruised the heel of the Seed of the woman, the prince of this world, John 14, 30. Lord, save me from being overpowered by his terrors. He pleads, Thou hast formerly heard me from the horns of the unicorn, that is, "saved me from him, in answer to my prayer." This may refer to the victory Christ had obtained over Satan and his temptations, Matt. 4, when the devil left him for a

season, Luke 4. 13, but now returned to attack him with his terrors. He that has delivered, doth, and will. The Father heard him always. Though he did not deliver him from death, yet he suffered him not to see corruption, but, the third day, raised him out of the dust of death. If he had helped him down from the cross, that would have hindered his undertaking, whereas his resurrection crowned it.

We should meditate on the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, till we experience in our souls the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.

12. Bashan, a district on the east of Jordan, was famous for its cattle.

16. The epithet, dogs, was commonly applied by the Jews to the Gentiles. These animals were unclean according to the law of Moses, and the Jews viewed all other nations beside themselves, as such. Roman soldiers were concerned in the crucifixion. By the change of a letter, most Hebrew copies of the psalms read "like a lion," instead of that which no doubt is the true reading, "they pierced." Some have supposed the variation was introduced by Jewish transcribers to avoid the literal application of this text to the sufferings of our Lord.

Ver. 22—31. The Saviour now speaks as risen from the dead. And as the first words of the complaint were used by Christ himself upon the cross, so the first words of the triumph are expressly applied to him, Heb. 2. 12. The certain prospect Christ had of the joy set before him, not only gave him a satisfactory answer to his prayers, but turned his complaints into praises; he saw of the travail of his soul, and was well satisfied; witness the triumphant words wherewith he breathed his last; "It is finished."

Five things are here spoken of, the view of which were the satisfaction and triumph of Christ in his sufferings.

1. That he should have a church in the world, and that those who were given him from eternity, should, in the fulness of time, be gathered in to him. This is implied here; that he should see his seed, Isa. 53. 10. It pleased him, that by the declaring of God's name, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel in its plainness and purity, many should be effectually called to him, and to God by him. Those who are thus called, should be brought into a very near and dear relation to him as his brethren, Heb. 2. 11; not believing Jews only. But Gentiles also, who became fellow-heirs and of the same

body, Eph. 3. 6. These his brethren should be incorporated into a congregation; such is the universal church, the whole family that is named from him, into which all the children of God that were scattered abroad, are collected, and in which they are united, John 11. 52; Eph. 1. 10. These should be accounted the seed of Jacob and Israel, ver. 23. The gospel-church is called the Israel of God, Gal. 6. 16.

2. That God should be glorified in him by that church. His Father's glory he had in view throughout his whole undertaking, John 17. 4, particularly in his sufferings, which he entered upon with this solemn request, Father, glorify thy name, John 12. 27, 28.

The business of christians, particularly in their solemn religious assemblies, is, to praise and glorify God, with a holy awe and reverence of his majesty; and therefore they that are here called upon to praise God, are called upon to fear him.

He is the subject of the church's praise: see Eph. 3. 21. All our praises must centre in the work of redemption. Christ was owned by his Father in his undertaking. The suffering of the Redeemer was graciously accepted as a full satisfaction for sin, ver. 24. Though it was offered for us poor sinners, the Father did not despise or abhor it for our sakes, nor did he turn his face from him that offered it. This ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. He himself will go on with his undertaking, and complete it. Christ, having engaged to bring many sons to glory, will perform his engagement to the utmost, and will lose none.

3. That all humble gracious souls should have a full satisfaction and happiness in him, ver. 26. It comforted the Lord Jesus in his sufferings, that in and through him, all true believers should have everlasting consolation. The poor in spirit shall be rich in blessings, spiritual blessings; the hungry shall be filled with good things. Christ's sacrifice being accepted, the saints shall eat of the bread of life, feed with an appetite upon the doctrine of Christ's mediation, which is meat and drink to the soul that knows its own nature and case. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness in Christ, shall have all they can desire to satisfy them and make them easy; and shall not labour, as they have done, for that which satisfies not. They that are much in praying,

shall be much in thanksgiving. They shall praise the Lord, that seek him, because, through Christ, they are sure of finding him; and the more earnest they are in seeking him, the more will their hearts be enlarged in his praises when they have found him. Christ has said, Because I live, ye shall live also, Joha 14. 19; that life shall be as sure, and as long as his.

4. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should extend to all corners of the earth. The Jews had long been the only professing people of God, now the Gentiles should be taken in. Serious reflection is the first step toward true conversion. The prodigal came first to himself, and then to his father. They should be admitted into communion with God. Those that turn to God, will make conscience of worshipping before him. And good reason there is, why all the nations should do homage to God, for, ver. 28, The kingdom is the Lord's. The kingdom of grace is the Lord Christ's, and he, as Mediator, is appointed Governor among the nations; Head over all things to his church. Let every tongue confess that he is Lord.

It should include many of different ranks, ver. 29. High and low, rich and poor, bond and free, meet in Christ. It is therefore our interest, as well as duty, to bow before the Lord Jesus, to give up ourselves to Him to be his subjects and worshippers; for this is the only way, and it is a sure way to secure our happiness when we go down to the dust. Seeing we cannot keep alive our own souls, it is our wisdom, by an obedient faith, to commit our souls to Jesus Christ, who is able to save and keep them alive, for ever.

5. That the church of Christ shall continue to the end, through all the ages of time. Observe their application to Christ; A seed shall serve him, shall keep up the solemn worship of him, and profess and practise obedience to him as their Master and Lord. Note; God will have a church in the world, to the end of time; in order to that, there shall be a succession of professing christians and gospel-ministers, from generation to generation. A seed shall serve him; there shall be a remnant more or less, to whom God will give grace to serve him. They shall be accounted to him for a generation; he will be the same to them, that he was to those who went before them. The generation of the

righteous, God will graciously own as his treasure; his children.

They shall come, shall rise up in their day to serve the honour of Christ, and the welfare of souls, in the generations to come. They shall transmit to them the gospel of Christ pure and entire, even to a people that shall be born hereafter. To them they shall declare that there is an everlasting righteousness which Jesus Christ has brought in. This righteousness of his, and not any of our own, they shall declare to be the foundation of all our hopes, and the fountain of all our joys: see Rom. 1. 16, 17. And that the work of redemption by Christ, is the Lord's own doing, 118. 23. We must declare to our children, that God has done this.

The wondrous spectacle here exhibited, should attract our most serious attention. Let us then step aside from worldly trifles to behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Let us consider the depth of the Saviour's humiliation in connexion with his personal dignity; and his intense sufferings, contrasted with the infinite delight that the Father had in him, and all the excellences combined in his character. Let us hearken to his complaints; let us witness his agony and temptations, and the cruelty and contempt with which he was treated, till man's ingenuity was exhausted, and his malice fatigued with tormenting him. Let us next follow Jesus, and see him nailed to the cross, suffering thereon till death closed the awful scene. What do we learn from this? Here we behold the eternal justice and holiness of God; the excellence and obligation of his spiritual law; the odiousness and guilt of sin; the inestimable worth of immortal souls; the ruined state of man; the insufficiency of all other expedients for satisfying the Divine justice; the vanity of the world; the malignity of the human heart; here we see the infinitely free love and compassion of God the Father, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his wretched sinners; the foundation of every human hope; the source of all grace and consolation; the example to which we are to be conformed, the treatment as christians we are to expect, and the conduct under it we are to adopt. Every lesson may here be learned that can profit the unlightened and humbled soul.

We also view the ransom accepted, the Saviour heard, raised from the dead, and

exalted to his glorious throne; at the right hand of the Father, interceding for sinful men, and receiving inestimable gifts to bestow on them; not ashamed to call his poor disciples brethren; declaring among them and by them the name and truths of the Lord; fulfilling in his exaltation the design of all his sufferings. Whoever will not bow down and worship this exalted Saviour must perish, for no man can keep alive his own soul.

Let those who go about to establish their own righteousness inquire, Why the beloved Son of God thus suffered, if their performances could atone for sin, or recommend a sinner to his offended God? Let the ungodly professor consider whether the Saviour thus honoured the Divine law, to purchase him the privilege of despising it. Let the careless take warning to flee from the wrath to come, and the trembling take encouragement to rest their hopes upon this merciful Redeemer. Let the tempted and distressed believer contemplate this scene, imitate the faith, patience, meekness, constancy, and love of the suffering Saviour, and cheerfully expect a happy event from every trial. Let us remember the price which our salvation cost the Redeemer; let us never be ashamed to profess our obligations to Him; let us instruct our families in the important truths of the gospel, desiring that they may be a seed to serve him, and pray continually that all the ends of the earth may receive his gospel, and become his accepted servants.

23, 24. *David* considers these verses are the song of praise referred to in the preceding verse.

30, 31. *For the next generation they shall declare his righteousness; to a people that shall be born, what he hath done.*—*Boothroyd.*

PSALM XXIII.

The psalmist here claims relation to God as his shepherd, ver. 1. He recounts his experience of the kind things God had done for him, ver. 2, 3, 5. Hence he infers, That he should want no good, ver. 1; That he needed to fear no evil, ver. 4; That God would never leave or forsake him in a way of mercy; and therefore he resolves never to leave or forsake God in a way of duty, ver. 6. In this, he looks not only to the blessings of God's providence, which made his outward condition prosperous, but to the communications of God's grace, received by lively faith, and returned in warm devotion, which filled

his soul with joy unspeakable. He here represents Christians receiving the benefit of all the care and tenderness of Christ, that great and good Shepherd.

"The Lord is my shepherd." In these words, the believer is taught to express his absolute acquiescence and satisfaction in the guardian care of the great Pastor of the universe, the Redeemer and preserver of men. With joy he reflects that he has a shepherd, and that shepherd is Jehovah! Where shall we find such diligence, such tenderness, skill, power, and unwearyed patience? Why should they fear who have such a friend? How can they want who have such a shepherd? Behold us, O Lord Jesus, in ourselves hungry, and thirsty, and feeble; diseased, defenceless, and lost. O feed us, and cherish us; heal us, and defend us; bear with us, and restore us.—(32.)

A flock of sheep, gentle and harmless, feeding in verdant pastures, under the care of a skilful, watchful, and tender shepherd, forms an emblem of believers brought back to the Shepherd of their souls. He that is the Shepherd of Israel, of the whole church in general, 80. 1, is the Shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognizance, Isa. 40. 11. He is the almighty God, every way able and willing to take care of them, John 10. 27—30. We have the supports and comforts of this life from God's good hand, our daily bread from him as our Father. The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to a wicked man, who relishes that only in it, which pleases the senses; but to a godly man, who tastes the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, and by faith relishes that, though he has but little of the world, it is a green pasture, 37. 16; Prov. 15. 16, 17. God's ordinances are the green pastures in which food is provided for all believers; the word of life is the nourishment of the new man. God makes his saints to lie down; he gives them quiet and contentment in their own minds, whatever their lot is; their souls dwell at ease in him, and that makes every pasture green. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances? Let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us lie down in them, abide in them; this is my rest for ever. It is by a constancy of the means of grace, that the soul is fed.

* The consolations of the Holy Spirit are

their refreshing waters; they repose in, are led, and guided by him. These are the still waters by which the saints are led; the streams which flow from the Fountain of living waters, and make glad the city of our God. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, in the way of my duty; in that he instructs me by his word, and directs me by conscience and providence. These are the paths in which all the saints desire to be led, and never to turn aside out of them. And those only are led by the still waters of comfort, that walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way. The work of righteousness is peace. In these paths we cannot walk, unless God lead us into them, and lead us in them.

If they wander, their Shepherd restores them by his kind rebukes and his effectual grace; when their souls are diseased, he restores their health and vigour. No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt is it to go astray, and so unapt to find the way back. The best saints are sensible of their proneness to go astray like lost sheep, 119. 176; but when God shows them their error; gives them repentance, and brings them back to their duty again, he restores the soul; and if he did not do so, they would wander endlessly, and be undone. Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. What can they want who have Jehovah for their shepherd? What will he withhold from friends who gave himself for them when enemies, that he might reconcile them to himself? Will not he who ransomed our souls provide for our bodies? Discontent and distrust proceed from unbelief, and an unsteady walk is the consequence; let us then simply trust our Shepherd's care, and hearken to his voice.

The valley of the shadow of death should be interpreted to be the most severe and terrible affliction, or the most dispensation of providence, that the psalmist ever could come under. Afflictions attend the people of God in this life: they continue long, yet they will walk and wade through them, and there will be an end at last; and in the midst of such dark dispensations, the psalmist intimates what would be the disposition of his mind, and what his conduct—I will fear no evil.—(27.)

Between the part of the flock on earth, and that which is gone to heaven, death lies like a dark valley that must be passed

in going from one to the other. But even in this delineation of the deepest distress, there are words which lessen the terror. Let us consider them as affording encouraging illustrations. It is but the shadow of death; the shadow of a serpent will not sting, nor the shadow of a sword kill. It is the valley of the shadow, deep indeed, and dark, and miry; but vallies are often fruitful, and so is death itself fruitful of comforts to God's people. It is a walk through it; they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safe to the mountain on the other side.

Should his soul draw nigh to the grave, and the sorrows of death compass him about, and he is upon the brink and borders of eternity, he should be fearless of evil, and sing, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

This danger is triumphed over, on good grounds. Death is a king of terrors, but not to the sheep of Christ. A child of God may receive its summons with holy security. The sucking child may play upon the hole of this asp; and the weaned child that, through grace, is weaned from this world, may put his hand upon this cockatrice's den, bidding a holy defiance to death. And there is ground enough for this confidence. There is no evil in it to a child of God; death cannot separate us from the love of God, and therefore it can do no real harm. It kills the body, but cannot touch the soul. The saints have God's gracious presence in their dying moments. The good Shepherd will conduct his sheep through this valley, where they are in danger of being set upon by the beasts of prey, the evening-wolves. His presence shall comfort them. His word and Spirit shall comfort them; his rod and staff, the shepherd's crook, or the rod under which the sheep passed when they were counted, Lev. 27. 32; or the staff with which the shepherds drove away the dogs that would scatter or worry the sheep. It is a comfort to the saints, when they come to die, that God knows them that are his; that he will rebuke the enemy; that he will guide them with his rod, and sustain them with his staff. The gospel is called the rod of Christ's strength, 110. 2; there is enough in that to comfort the saints when dying, and underneath them are the everlasting arms.

How highly he magnifies God's gracious vouchsafements to him! ver. 5. Thou hast provided for me all things pertaining both

to life and godliness, all things requisite both for body and soul, for time and eternity; such a bountiful benefactor is God to all his people; and it becomes them abundantly to utter his great goodness. Thus tenderly are the children of God looked after. Plentiful provision is made for their bodies, and for their souls; for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. If Providence do not bestow upon us thus plentifully for our natural life, it is our own fault if it be not made up to us in spiritual blessings.

The Lord's people feast at his table upon the provisions of his love. Satan and wicked men are not able to destroy their comforts, while they are anointed with the unction of the Holy Spirit, and drink of the cup of salvation ever full.

Observe what he promises himself—goodness and mercy, all the streams of it, flowing from the fountain; pardoning mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining, supplying mercy. The manner of the conveyance of it; It shall follow me, as the water out of the rock followed the camp of Israel through the wilderness; it shall follow into all places, and all conditions; shall be always ready. The continuance of it; It shall follow me all my life long, even to the last; for whom God loves, he loves to the end. The constancy of it; All the days of my life as long as the day comes; it shall be new every morning, *Isa. 3. 22, 23*, like the manna that was given to the Israelites daily. The certainty of it; Surely it shall. It is as sure as the promise of the God of truth can make it; and we know whom we have believed. Here is a prospect of perfection of bliss in the future state. All this, and heaven too! We serve a good Master.

Past experience teaches believers to trust that the goodness and mercy of God will follow them all the days of their life, and it is their desire, expectation, and determination, to seek their happiness in the service of God here, and they hope to enjoy his love, without an enemy or interruption, for ever in heaven. While he pleases that we should continue here, he can make any situation pleasant, by the unction of his Spirit and the joys of his salvation. Let us then thank him for the past and present, and trust him for the future; keeping close to his service now, and simply reposing all our confidence in him. If God's goodness to us be like the morning light, which shines

more and more to the perfect day; let not ours to him be like the morning-cloud, and the early dew that passeth away. Those that would be satisfied with the blessings of God's house, must keep close to the duties of it.

2. To rest and repose myself at noon, as the manner is in hot countries. He leadeth me gently, accommodating himself to mine infirmities as shepherds do to their sheep.—*Psalm.*

4. In rugged and mountainous countries, a staff is absolutely needed by the traveller. In the east, travellers even carried a spare staff, lest one should fail: see *Luke 9. 3*. The shadow of death is used to denote imminent danger, *Jer. 2. 6*; *Ps. 44. 19*, severe affliction, *Ps. 107. 10, 14*; fear and terror, *Job 24. 17*, dreadful darkness, *Job 10. 21, 22*. It gives emphasis, by contrast, to the light of the gospel, *Matt. 4. 16*; *Luke 1. 79*.

PSALM XXIV.

This psalm is concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ; (1.) His kingdom of providence, by which he rules the world, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The kingdom of his grace, by which he rules in his church. Concerning the subjects of that kingdom; their character, ver. 3—6. (3.) Concerning the King of that kingdom; and a summons to all to give him admission, ver. 7—10. The ascension of Christ is described.

Ver. 1, 2. The psalmist begins by declaring the sovereignty of God the Creator over all the earth. All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand; so that, wherever a child of God goes, he does not go off his Father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its productions, is but lent to us; it is the Lord's. The most remote from us also is the Lord's.

The habitable part of this earth, *Prov. 8. 31*, is his in a special manner—the world, and they that dwell therein. We ourselves are not our own, our bodies, our souls, are not. All souls are God's; for he is the Father of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. Our tongues are not our own, they are to be at his service. Even those of the children of men are his, that know him not, nor own their relation to him. This shows that though God is graciously pleased to accept the devotions and services of his peculiar chosen people, ver. 3—5, it is not because he needs them, or can be benefited by them, for the earth is his, and all in it, *Exod. 19. 5*; *Ps. 50. 12*. It is likewise to be applied to the dominion Christ has, as Mediator, over the utmost parts of the

earth, which are given him for his possession.

2. In Job 26. 7, it is said that God hangeth the earth upon nothing: a globe which hangs in the expanse is hung upon nothing. Here it is said, the Lord hath founded the earth upon the seas, the waters are continually flowing through the cavities of the earth, thus it is founded upon, or, as in Ps. 136. 6, stretched out above the waters.—*T. H. Horne.*

Ver. 3—6. Here is an inquiry after heavenly things. A soul that knows and considers its own nature, original, and immortality, when it has viewed the earth and the fulness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied; it will think of ascending toward God, toward heaven; will ask, "What shall I do to rise to that high place, where the Lord manifests himself, that I may abide in that happy, holy place, where he meets his people, and makes them holy and happy? What shall I do that I may be of those whom God owns for his peculiar people?"

In answer to this inquiry, we have, the properties of God's peculiar people. They keep themselves from all the gross acts of sin. None that were ceremonially unclean, might enter into the mountain of the temple, which signified that cleanness of conversation, which is required in all that have fellowship with God. They make conscience of being inwardly, as good as they seem to be outwardly. We make nothing of religion, if we do not make heart-work of it. We must not allow ourselves in secret heart-impurities, which are open before the eye of God.

No man, indeed, can ascend into heaven through his own righteousness, but He who came down from heaven, and performed a perfect sinless obedience to the will of God. Sinners of old were purified through faith in Him that was to come, by typical offerings and ablutions, before they approached the sanctuary. We have been cleansed from our sins, and renewed unto holiness, by the blood of Christ, and the washing of the Holy Ghost. Thus we become his people; thus we receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of our salvation.—(32.)

They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world; whose hearts are not carried out toward the wealth of the world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense; who do not choose these things for their portion, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain and unsatisfying.

They are such as deal honestly both

with God and man. They have not sworn deceitfully, nor broken their promises, violated their engagements, or taken any false oath.

They are a praying people, ver. 6. This is the generation of them that seek him. In every age there is a remnant of such as these. They join themselves to God, to seek him; not only in earnest prayer, but in serious endeavours to obtain his favour, and keep in his love. It is to the hill of the Lord that we must ascend, and, the way being up-hill, we have need to put forth ourselves to the utmost, as those that seek diligently. They join themselves to the people of God, to seek God with them; conforming to the patterns of the saints that are gone before. "They seek God's face, as Jacob," who was therefore surnamed Israel, because he wrestled with God and prevailed, sought him and found him. "They shall seek God's face in Jacob," that is, in the assemblies of his people. As all believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, so all that strive in prayer, are the spiritual seed of Jacob, to whom God never said, Seek ye me in vain.

God's peculiar people shall be made truly and for ever happy. They shall be blessed; they shall receive the blessing from the Lord; those whom God blesses, are blessed indeed. They shall be justified, and sanctified. These are the spiritual blessings they hunger and thirst after, Matt. 5. 6. Righteousness is blessedness; from God only we must expect it, for we have no righteousness of our own. They shall receive the reward of their righteousness, even the crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give, 2 Tim. 4. 8. They shall be saved; for God himself will be the God of their salvation. Note; Where God gives righteousness, he designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven, shall be brought safe to heaven, and will find what they have been seeking, to their endless satisfaction.

Ver. 7—10. The splendid entry here described, it is probable, refers to the solemn bringing in of the ark into the tent David pitched for it, or the temple Solomon built for it. The gates, we may suppose, were thrown open, and the symbol of the Divine presence and favour was carried into the holy of holies. The porters are called upon to open the doors, called

everlasting doors, because much more durable than the door of the tabernacle, which was but a curtain, and they ask, Who is this King of glory? They that bare the ark, answer in the language before us, and very fitly, because the ark was a symbol or token of God's presence, Josh. 3: 11: God, in his word and ordinance, is thus to be welcomed by us with great readiness; the door and gates must be thrown open to him. Let the word of the Lord come into the innermost and uppermost place in our souls; with all reverence, remembering how great a God he is with whom we have to do.

Doubtless, it points at Christ, of whom the ark, with the mercy-seat, was a type. We may apply it to the ascension of Christ into heaven, and the welcome given to him there. The gates of heaven may be truly called everlasting. Our Redeemer found them shut, but, having by his blood made atonement for sin, as one having authority, he demanded entrance; as the Forerunner, he is for us entered, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The angels were to worship him, Heb. 1: 6; and, accordingly, they here ask with wonder, Who is he?—this that cometh with dyed garments from Bozrah, Isa. 63: 1-3; for he appears in that world as a Lamb that had been slain. It is answered, that he is strong and mighty, mighty in battle to save his people, and to subdue his and their enemies.

We may apply it to Christ's entrance into the souls of men by his word and Spirit, that they may be his temples. Christ's presence in them is like that of the ark in the temple; it sanctifies them. Behold, he stands at the door, and knocks, Rev. 3: 20. It is required, that the gates and doors of the heart be opened to him; not only as admission is given to a guest, but as possession is delivered to the rightful owner. This is the gospel call and demand; that we let Jesus Christ, the King of glory, come into our souls, and welcome him with hosannas, Blessed is he that cometh. We are concerned to ask, Who is this King of glory? to acquaint ourselves with him, whom we are to believe in, and to love above all. And the answer is ready; He is Jehovah, and will be Jehovah our righteousness, an all-sufficient Saviour to us. He is strong and mighty, and the Lord of hosts, is at our peril if we deny him entrance.

Lord, open the everlasting door of our immortal souls by thy grace, that we may now receive thee, and be willingly and wholly thine; and that at length we may be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting.

PSALM XXV.

This psalm is full of devout affection to God. We may learn what it is to pray, ver. 1, 15. What we must pray for; the pardon of sin, ver. 6, 7, 18; direction in the way of duty, ver. 4, 5; the favour of God, ver. 16; deliverance out of our troubles, ver. 17, 18; preservation from our enemies, ver. 20, 21; and the salvation of the church of God, ver. 22. What we may plead in prayer; our confidence in God, ver. 2, 3, 5, 20, 21; our distress, and the malice of our enemies, ver. 17, 19; our sincerity, ver. 21. What precious promises we have to encourage us in prayer; of guidance and instruction, ver. 8, 9, 12; the benefit of the covenant, ver. 10; and the pleasure of communion with God, ver. 13, 14. It is easy to apply the several passages of this psalm to ourselves; for we have often troubles, and always sins to complain of, at the throne of grace.

Ver. 1-7. Here we have professions of desire toward God, and dependence on him. The psalmist professes his desire towards God, ver. 1. In worshipping God, we must lift up our souls to him. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God. With holy contempt of the world and the things of it, by fixed thought and active faith, we must set God before us, and raise our desires toward Him.

The psalmist professes his dependence upon God, and begs for the benefit and comfort of that dependence, ver. 2. His conscience witnessed for him, that he had no confidence in himself, or in any creature, and that he had no diffidence of God, or of his power or promise. If we make our confidence in God our stay, it shall not be our shame; and if we triumph in him, our enemies shall not triumph over us. It is certain that none who, by a believing attendance, wait on God, and, by a believing hope, wait for him, shall be made ashamed of it. That might be the lot of them, ver. 3, that transgress without cause—to no purpose. They know

their attempts against God are fruitless; they imagine a vain thing, and therefore they will soon be ashamed of them.

He begs direction from God in the way of his duty, ver. 4, 5. The most intelligent both need and desire to be taught of God. The paths of the Lord, and his truth, are the same; Divine laws are all founded upon Divine truths. The way of God's precepts is the way of truth, 119. 30. Christ is both the Way and the Truth, and therefore we must learn Christ. He desires of God, in order to this, that he would enlighten his understanding concerning his duty, that he would incline his will to it, and strengthen him in it; Lead me, and so teach me. We go no further in the way to heaven, than God is pleased to lead us, and to hold us up. He pleads his great expectation from God. Those that choose the salvation of God as their end, and make him the God of their salvation, may come boldly to him for direction in the way that leads to that end. If we sincerely desire to know our duty, with a resolution to do it, we need not question but that God will direct us in it. He appeals to God's infinite mercy, and casts himself upon that, not pretending to any merit of his own, ver. 6.

He is in a special manner earnest for the pardon of his sins, ver. 7. He specifies particularly, Remember not the sins of my youth; remember them not against me, lay them not to my charge, enter not into judgment with me for them. When God pardons sin, he is said to remember it no more, which denotes a full remission. He prays that he might be accepted in God's sight. We need desire no more to make us happy, than for God to remember us with favour. His plea is, "according to thy mercy, and for thy goodness' sake." Note; It is God's goodness, and not ours; his mercy, and not our own merit, must be our plea for the pardon of sin, and all the good we need. This plea we must always rely upon, sensible of poverty and unworthiness, and satisfied of the riches of God's mercy and grace.

When God remembers his mercy, he forgets our sins; and when he forgets our sins, he remembers his mercy, ver. 7. What else is his mercy, but the forgiveness, the blotting out, the not imputing of sin? Who that has lived long in the world can survey the time past of his life without breaking forth into this petition, Remember not the sins of my youth,

adding, the many transgressions of his riper years?—(33.)

How boundless is that mercy which covers for ever the sins and follies of a youth spent without God and without hope! Blessed be his name, the blood of the great sacrifice can wash away every stain, and leave the conscience of the believing and justified sinner calm and tranquil in recollection of the past, full of hope in anticipation of the future.—(47.)

Ver. 8—14. Let us view the great and precious promises which we have in these verses, and observe,

To whom these promises belong. We are all sinners; and can we hope for any advantage by them? Yes, ver. 8. He will teach sinners, though they be sinners; for Christ came into the world to save sinners, to teach sinners, to call sinners to repentance.

These promises are sure to those, who, though they have gone astray, now keep God's word, obey him with cheerfulness, dread his wrath, and fear offending him.

These promises are grounded on the perfections of God's nature. We value a promise by the character of him that makes it; we therefore depend upon God's promises. Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it.

All the paths of the Lord; that is, all his promises, and all his providences, are mercy and truth. All God's dealings with his people are according to the mercy of his purposes, and the truth of his promises; all he does, comes from love, covenant-love; and they may see in it his mercy displayed, and his word fulfilled. What a rich satisfaction may this be to good people, whatever afflictions they are exercised with. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, and so it will appear when they come to their journey's end.

These promises are, that God will instruct and direct them in the way of their duty, the way of reconciliation to God, the way to a well-grounded peace of conscience, and the way to eternal life. The meek will he guide, the meek will he teach. Those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught and to follow Divine guidance, these he will guide in judgment, that is, by the rule of the written word; he will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness, and compassion. He will teach them his way.

Whoever truly fears God shall certainly be taught of God himself the safe and happy way. He will surely be directed to the Saviour, and there will find rest for his soul; reposing his care and confidence upon his reconciled God, he will cheerfully wait for more complete joys in heaven. That we come short of this happy life is the effect of our remaining unbelief and disobedience; because we are so often heedlessly running into the snares of the world, and are caught by Satan's wiles.

The soul that is sanctified by the grace of God; and, much more, that is comforted by the peace of God, dwells at ease, ver. 13. Even when the body is sick, and lies in pain, yet the soul may dwell at ease in God, may repose in him, as its rest. Many things occur to make us uneasy, but there is enough in the covenant of grace to make us easy.

He will give to them and theirs as much of this world as is good for them. God has a blessing for the generation of the upright. God will admit them into communion with himself, ver. 14. They that receive the truth in the love of it, and experience the power of it, best understand the mystery of it. They know the meaning of his providence, and what God is doing with them. They know by experience the blessings of the covenant, and the pleasure of that fellowship which gracious souls have with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. This honour have all his saints.

Ver. 15—22. The psalmist, encouraged by the promises he had been meditating upon, here concludes the psalm, as he began, with professions of dependence upon God, and desire toward him.

Being in distress, in many distresses, the troubles of his heart were enlarged, ver. 17; he grew more and more troubled in mind. Sense of sin afflicted him more than any thing else: that brake and wounded his spirit, and made his outward troubles lie heavy upon him. He was in affliction and pain, ver. 18. His enemies were many and malicious; with cruel hatred they hated him. Such were Christ's enemies, the persecutors of his church.

He expressed the dependence he had upon God in these distresses, ver. 15; Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord. But it is an eye of faith, that we must have toward God, who is a Spirit, Zech. 9. 1. Our meditation of him must be

sweet, and we must always set him before us: we must live a life of communion with God in the whole course of our conversation. David had the comfort of this, in his affliction. Those who have their eyes ever toward God, shall not have their feet long in the net. He repeats his profession of dependence upon God, ver. 20, and of expectation from him, ver. 21. It is good thus to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.

He prays earnestly to God for relief.

It is observable, that, as to his affliction, he asks for no more than God's regard to it; Look upon my affliction and my pain, and do with it as thou pleasest. But, as to his sin, he asks for a full pardon, Forgive all my sins. When in trouble, we should be more concerned about our sins, to get them pardoned, than about our afflictions, to get them removed. He prays, Turn thee unto me. And if God turn to us, no matter who turns from us.

He pleads God's mercy; Have mercy upon me. Men of the greatest merits were undone, if they had not to do with a God of infinite mercies. He pleads his own misery, especially the troubles of his heart. He pleads the iniquity of his enemies; Lord, consider them, how cruel they are, and deliver me out of their hands. He pleads his own integrity, ver. 21. Though guilty before God, yet, as to his enemies, he had the testimony of conscience; he had done them no wrong.

He pleads for the church of God, ver. 22. The psalmist was now in trouble himself, but he forgets not the distresses of God's church. Let us remember our brethren in tribulation, and pray for them also, that they may be redeemed from all their sins, enemies, temptations, and troubles; and that the church of God may be prospered and enlarged. Good men have little comfort in their own safety, while the church is in distress and danger. This prayer is a prophecy, that God would, at length, give Israel rest from all their enemies round about. It is a prophecy of the sending of the Messiah in due time to redeem Israel from his iniquities, 130. 8, and so to redeem them from their troubles. It refers to the happiness of the future state. In heaven will God's Israel be perfectly redeemed from all troubles.

Blessed Saviour, thou hast graciously taught us that without thee we can do nothing. Do thou teach us how to pray,

how to appear before thee in the way that thou shalt choose, and how to lift up our whole hearts, affections, and desires after thee, for thou art the Lord our righteousness.—(37.)

PSALM XXVI.

David, in this psalm, (1.) Appeals to God touching his integrity, ver. 1, 2, for the proof of which he alleges his constant regard to God and his grace, ver. 3, and his rooted antipathy to sin and sinners, ver. 4, 5. (2.) His sincere affection to the ordinances of God, ver. 6—8. He deprecates the doom of the wicked, ver 9, 10. He casts himself upon the mercy and grace of God; with a resolution to hold fast his integrity, and his hope in God, ver. 11, 12. David is here, by the spirit of prophecy, carried out to speak of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here says of his spotless innocence, was fully and eminently true, and of him only, and to him we may apply it. We are complete in him.

Ver. 1—5. It is supposed that David penned this psalm when persecuted by Saul, though some consider it speaks of Israel in later times. Innocence itself is no fence against the darts of calumny. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was made a reproach of men, and told his followers, they also must expect to have all manner of evil said against them falsely.

The psalmist appeals to God as Judge in his cause, and looks forward in faith to the time when he should again assemble with the congregation of Israel.

The man that walks in his integrity, yet trusting wholly in the mercy and grace of God, is evidenced to be in a state of acceptance according to the covenant of which Jesus was the Mediator, in virtue of his spotless obedience, even unto death. The Lord may be appealed to, to plead his cause, and he shall not slide, but be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. This man desires to have his inmost soul searched and proved by the Lord. He is aware of the deceitfulness of his own heart; he desires to detect and mortify every sin; and he longs to be satisfied of his being a true believer, and to be conformed to the holy truths which he believes.

He had no fellowship with the unfruit-

ful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, ver. 4, 5. By this it appeared he was truly loyal to his prince. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God. Note; Great care to avoid bad company, is both a good evidence of our integrity, and a good means to preserve us in it. As good men, in concert, make one another better, and are enabled to do more good, so bad men, in combination, make one another worse, and do more mischief. In all this, David was a type of Christ, who, though he received sinners, and ate with them, to instruct them and do them good, yet was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, particularly from the pharisees, those dissemblers; thus David was an example to christians, when they join themselves to Christ, to save themselves from this untoward generation, Acts 2. 40.

Ver. 6—12. In the exercise of repentance and conscientious obedience, as well as in the observance of typical purifications, David would prepare for offering the sacrifices which represented the great atonement on which his faith and hope were rested. With serious preparation of heart, and in the exercise of repentance and faith, the christian will approach the table of the Lord to enjoy fellowship with him and his disciples, and to tell the wonders of redeeming love.

Hypocrites and dissemblers may indeed be found attending on God's ordinances; but it is a good sign of sincerity, if we attend upon them, as the psalmist here tells us he did, ver. 6—8. He would neither allow of any other confidence, nor abuse this as an encouragement to sin.

In our preparations for solemn ordinances, we must not only clear ourselves from infidelity and hypocrisy, but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity, by renewing our repentance, and making a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences, for the purifying and pacifying of them. Note; All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands, and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our Altar, Heb. 13. 10. It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed, and ourselves among them that compass it.

In all his attendance on God's ordinances, he aimed at the glory of God. We ought to publish God's wondrous

works, and tell of them, for his glory, and the excitement of others to praise him.

He did this with delight, and from true affection to God, and his institutions. Touching this, he appeals to God, ver. 8. Note; All that truly love God, love the ordinances of God, because in them he manifests his honour. Those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching to him, find it a constant pleasure, an evidence of their integrity, and an earnest of their endless happiness.

He would dread above all things the doom of wicked men; he never loved or associated with them in this world; and therefore could in faith pray that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gathered, to return to God that gave them. It concerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints or with sinners; whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful, 1 Sam. 25. 29, or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, Matt. 13. 30. Death gathers us to those that are our people while we live, whom we choose to associate with. With whom we cast in our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot, to eternity. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous. The psalmist dreads dying the death of the wicked; both are of that mind. But those who will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, may in faith pray not to be companions with them in their misery.

The psalmist, with holy, humble confidence, commits himself to the grace of God, ver. 11, 12. He promises that by the grace of God he would persevere in his duty. He prays for the Divine grace, to enable him to do so, and to give him the comfort of it. We must rely only upon God's mercy, and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them. He pleases himself with his steadiness, as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the temptations of the world; and that his comforts were firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world.

He feels his ground firm under him; and, as he delights in blessing God with his congregations on earth, he trusts that shortly he shall join the great assembly in heaven, in singing praises to God and to the Lamb for evermore.

While here we behold Jesus Christ, in a figure, as holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and wash our hearts and hands in his precious blood and saving grace, let us observe how comfortable it is, under calumny, to possess conscious innocence. Those who trust in God, are kept by his mighty power, through faith unto salvation; and the faith in, or sense of Jesus' love, and due regard to his word, will effectually restrain from sin. But even those who walk in their uprightness, must before God stand on the foundation of Jesus' redeeming blood and infinite mercy; all their steadfastness in Christ, or his way, must be thankfully ascribed to their God.—(10.)

PSALM XXVII.

This psalm is very expressive of the pious and devout affections with which gracious souls are carried out toward God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Here is, (1.) The courage and holy bravery of the psalmist's faith, ver. 1—3. The complacency he took in communion with God, and the benefit he experienced by it, ver. 4—6. (2.) His desire toward God, and his favour and grace, ver. 7—9, 11, 12. His expectations from God, and the encouragement he gives to others to hope in him, ver. 10, 13, 14. Let our hearts be thus affected by this psalm.

Ver. 1—6. With what a lively faith the psalmist triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him! The Lord is my light. God is a light to his people, to show them the way when they are in doubt, to comfort and rejoice their hearts when they are in sorrow. It is in his light, that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever. He that followeth him shall not abide in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Lord will guide every believer into the knowledge of his truth, and the comforts of his salvation. He is their Salvation; in whom they are safe, and by whom they shall be saved. He will keep them by his power unto complete salvation: happy are they whose faith and hope is as firm as their security is certain. He is the strength of my life; not only the protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain; but the strength of my frail, weak life, who keeps me from fainting and dying

away. God, who is the believer's light, is the strength of his life; not only by whom, but in whom he lives and only moves. In God let us strengthen ourselves.

His enemies came upon him, but they fell; they were so confounded and weakened, that they could not go on with their enterprise. Thus they that came to take Christ, John 18. 6. These being fallen, he is fearless of the rest. Hosts cannot hurt us, if the Lord of hosts protect us: nay, in this assurance he will be confident that he shall be safe. Let us entreat the Lord to give us faith, and to increase our faith; that we may be delivered from tormenting and dishonouring fears. The gracious presence of God, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his Spirit in the hearts of his people; these are the secret of his tabernacle; and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and serenity of mind in which they dwell at ease. And by faith in the promise of God, he triumphs before the victory.

See with what a gracious earnestness he prays for constant communion with God in holy ordinances, ver. 4. All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? Not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man, to tarry but for a night; or to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abides not in the house for ever; but to dwell there all the days of their life: for there the Son abides ever. Do we hope that the praising of God will be the blessedness of our eternity? Surely then we ought to make it the business of our time.

How earnestly he covets this; This is the one thing I have desired of the Lord, and which I will seek after. This he had at heart more than any thing. Note; They that truly desire communion with God, will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, Prov. 18. 1. He desired to attend in God's courts, that he might have the pleasure of meditating upon God. He knew something of the beauty of the Lord, the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the Divine Being, and his perfections; his holiness is his beauty, 110. 3; his goodness is his beauty, Zech. 9. 17. With faith and holy love, we with pleasure behold this beauty, and observe more and more in it. He desired to have the satisfaction of being instructed in his duty. Mary's sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word, Christ calls the one thing needful,

and the good part. He promised himself, could he but have a place in God's house, there troubles would not find him. The temple was thought a safe place, 2 Kings 11. 3; Neh. 6. 10. But the safety of believers is not in the walls of the temple; it is in the God of the temple, and their comfort in communion with him. There he should be pleasant and cheerful, ver. 6.

Whatever the christian is as to this life, he considers the favour and service of God as the one thing needful. This he desires, prays for, and seeks after. He desires, if he can, to dwell near the ordinances of God, that he may have constant access to them; and they will be the rest and habitation of his soul, to which he will return with pleasure when he has been called from them. He delights in contemplating the beauty and glory of the Lord in the person of Jesus Christ. He inquires his will by studying his word, and praying for his teaching Spirit. He will hide himself from his foes in the presence chamber of his King and Father, and while he drinks the waters which flow from the Rock of ages, he will rest his hope and fix his soul upon the Rock itself for support. With such desires and experiences we may rejoice in the midst of tribulation. The Saviour, who suffered and conquered for us, will conquer in us, and we may celebrate every mercy with thanksgiving.

Ver. 7—14. The psalmist expresses his desire toward God, in many petitions. If he cannot now go up to the house of the Lord; yet, wherever he is, he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer. Observe here, the true nature of religious worship is seeking the face of God. He would have us seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good; and this is the saint's purpose and desire. The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other living things, 145. 16, but it is only the shining of his face, that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, 4. 6, 7. Observe the kind invitation of a gracious God; it is not only a permission, but a precept; his commanding us to seek, implies a promise of finding. God calls us to seek his face, in our conversion to him, and in our converse with him. He calls us by his Spirit, by his word, by the stated opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our court to lying vanities,

God is, in love to us, calling us in him to seek our own mercies. See the ready compliance of a gracious soul; the call is immediately returned. The call was general, "Seek ye my face;" but we must apply it to ourselves, "I will seek it." The word does us no good, when we do not ourselves accept the exhortation. Instead of attending to the call of God to seek his face, men in general turn their backs on him and his ways; but a gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in the day of his power.

The psalmist is very particular in his requests. 1. For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that, ver. 9. Let me never want the reviving sense of thy favour; love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; put not thy servant away in anger. 2. For the continuance of his presence with him. Whither shall I go but to thee? Withdraw not thy power from me, for then I am helpless; withdraw not thy good will to me, for then I am comfortless. 3. For the benefit of Divine guidance, ver. 11. Give me to know my duty, that I may walk rightly and surely. He begs to be guided in a plain path, because of his enemies. Lord, lead me in a plain path, that they may have nothing ill, or nothing that looks ill, to lay to my charge. 4. For the benefit of Divine protection, ver. 12. Lord, I have no fence against mine enemies, but thy power over their consciences. Herein the psalmist was a type of Christ; for false witnesses rose up against him; but though he was delivered into their wicked hands, he was not delivered over to their will, for they could not prevent his exaltation.

He expresses his dependence upon God. That he would help and succour him when all other helps and succours failed, ver. 10. His time to help those that trust in him, is, when all other helpers fail, when it is most for his honour and their comfort; with him the fatherless find mercy. This promise has often been fulfilled in the letter of it. Forsaken orphans have been taken under the special care of Divine Providence, which has raised up relief and friends for them, in a way that could not have been expected. God is a surer and better Friend than our earthly parents are, or can be.

In due time he should see the displays of his goodness, ver. 13. Even the best

saints are ready to faint, when their troubles become grievous and tedious; but faith is a sovereign cordial, it keeps them from desponding under their burden, and from despairing of relief. But what was the belief which supported the psalmist?—That he should see the goodness of the Lord. They that walk by faith in the goodness of the Lord, shall in due time walk in the sight of that goodness. This he hopes to see in the land of the living; that he should outlive his troubles, and not perish under them. It is his comfort, not so much that he shall see the land of the living, as that he shall see the goodness of God in it; for that is the comfort of all creature-comforts to a gracious soul. In the land of Canaan, and in Jerusalem where the lively oracles were; there God was known, and there he hoped to see his goodness. Or, in heaven. It is that land alone which may truly be called the land of the living, where there is no more death. There is nothing like the believing hope of eternal life, the foresights of that glory, and foretastes of those pleasures, to keep us from fainting under all calamities.

In the mean time he should be strengthened to bear up under his burdens, ver. 14; whether he says it to himself, or to his friends, this encourages him. He shall strengthen thy heart, shall sustain the spirit, and then the spirit shall sustain the infirmity. In that strength, keep close to God, and to your duty. Wait on the Lord by faith, and prayer, and humble resignation to his will; whatever you do, grow not remiss in your attendance upon God.

Let us look unto the suffering Saviour, and pray in faith, not to be delivered up into the hands of our enemies. Let us encourage others to wait on the Lord, and not to yield to fear in the midst of conflicts and temptations, for his grace will be sufficient for their support and deliverance. In heaven, where sin and death never entered, we shall enjoy his goodness. Let us then encourage each other to wait on the Lord with patient expectation, and fervent prayer.

8. Many emendations have been proposed to render the meaning of this verse more clear. Dr. A. Clarke, without proposing any alteration in the text, suggests a rendering, which, by adding the words printed in italics, may be thus paraphrased: "Unto thee, *his church*, God hath said, Seek ye, *all who compose it*, my face. To which, *ye, his church*, have answered, Thy face, O Jehovah, I will seek."

13. "Yet I believe that I shall enjoy good, O Jehovah, in the land of the living."—Boothroyd.

PSALM XXVIII.

The former part of this psalm is (1.) The prayer of a saint militant in distress, ver. 1—3, to which is added the doom of God's implacable enemies, ver. 4, 5. (2.) The latter part is the thanksgiving of a saint triumphant, delivered out of his distresses, ver. 6—8, to which is added a prophetic prayer for all God's faithful loyal subjects, ver. 9. It is hard to say which of these two conditions David was in, when he penned it.

Ver. 1—5. In these verses, David is very earnest in prayer. Observe his faith in prayer: O Lord my rock; denoting his belief of God's power, He is a rock; and his dependence upon that power, He is *my* rock, on whom I build my hope. Observe his fervency in prayer, and how solicitous he is to obtain an answer. Nothing can be so painful to a gracious soul, as the want of God's favour, and the sense of his displeasure. What is the misery of the damned, but this, that God is for ever silent to them, and deaf to their cry? He had good hopes that God would favour him; not only an earnest desire, but an earnest expectation to receive an answer of peace. The most holy place is called the oracle: there the ark and the mercy-seat were: there God was said to dwell between the cherubims, and thence he spake to his people, Numb. 7. 89. That was a type of Christ, and it is to him that we must lift up our eyes and hands, for through him all good comes to us.

Believers should not rest till they have received some satisfactory token that their prayers are heard. Otherwise their case would resemble those who have perished in their sins. But this can never befall such as come to the mercy-seat of a reconciled God in a place not made with hands, through the intercession of our great High Priest, sincerely desiring and humbly hoping for the blessings he purchased by his sufferings, and is now exalted to bestow.

He deprecates the doom of wicked people, ver. 3. Save me from being entangled in the snares they have laid for me. Save me from being infected with their sins, and from doing as they do. Lord, never leave me to myself, to use such arts of deceit and treachery for my safety, as they use for my ruin. Let no event draw me either into the imitation, or into the

interest of wicked people. Good men dread the way of sinners; the best are sensible of the danger they are in of being drawn aside: we should all pray earnestly to God for his grace to keep us. Save me from being involved in their doom; let me not be led forth with the workers of iniquity, for I am none of them that speak peace, while war is in their hearts. Those who are careful not to partake with sinners in their sins, have reason to hope that they shall not partake with them in their plagues, Rev. 18. 4.

He imprecates the just judgments of God upon the workers of iniquity, ver. 4. This is not the language of passion or revenge, nor inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies. This prayer is a prophecy, that God will, sooner or later, render to all impenitent sinners according to their deserts. If what has been done amiss, be not undone by repentance, there will certainly come a day, when God will render to every man who persists in his evil deeds, according to them. It is a prophecy of the destruction of destroyers. Observe, he foretells that God will reward them, not only according to their deeds, but according to the wickedness of their endeavours; sinners shall be reckoned with, not only for the mischief they have done, but for the mischief they designed, and did what they could to effect.

He foretells their destruction, for their contempt of God, and his hand, ver. 5. Disregard of the works of God, is the cause of the sin of sinners, and becomes the cause of their ruin. Why do men question the being or attributes of God, but because they do not duly regard his works, which declare his glory? Why do men forget God, and live without him, nay, live in rebellion against him, but because they consider not that wrath which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men? Why do the enemies of God's people hate and persecute them, but because they regard not the works God has wrought for his church, by which he has made it appear how dear it is to him? This leads men to despise even his redeeming love.

Ver. 6—9. The servant of God is often encouraged in hope to anticipate the answers of his prayers while he is yet asking. They that pray in faith, may rejoice in hope. Has God heard our supplications? Let us then bless his name.

He encourages himself to hope in God for the perfecting of every thing that concerns him; having given to God the glory of his grace, ver. 6, he is humbly bold to take the comfort of it, ver. 7. This is the method of attaining peace; let it begin with praise that it is attainable. Observe his dependence upon God. The Lord is my strength, to support me, and carry me on, through all my services and sufferings. He is my shield, to protect me from all the malicious designs of my enemies against me. I have chosen him to be so, I have always found him so, and I expect he will still be so. Observe his experience of the benefit of that dependence. My very trust in him has helped me, in the mean time, and kept me from fainting, 27. 13. Also his improvement of this experience. The joy of a believer is seated in the heart, while, in the laughter of the fool, the heart is sorrowful. It is great joy, joy unspeakable, and full of glory. The heart that truly believes, shall in due time greatly rejoice; it is joy and peace in believing, that we are to expect. God shall have the praise of it; thus must we express our gratitude.

He pleases himself with the interest which all good people, through Christ, have in God, ver. 8; The Lord is the strength of every believer. The saints rejoice in others' comforts as well as their own; for as we have not the less benefit from the light of the sun, so neither from the light of God's countenance, for others' sharing therein. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their strength and ours; Christ their Lord and ours, 1 Cor. 1. 2. He is their strength, the strength of all Israel, because he is the saving strength of his anointed, that is, 1. Of David in the type. God, in strengthening him that was their king and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself God's anointed, it was the unction he had received, that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and entitled him to the Divine protection. 2. Of Christ, his Anointed, his Messiah, in the antitype. God was his saving strength, qualified him for his undertaking, and carried him through it: see 89. 21; Isa. 49. 5; 50. 7, 9. And so he becomes the strength of all the saints; the church's head strengthened David, and diffuses strength to all the members.

He concludes with a short, but comprehensive prayer for the church of God,

ver. 9. God's interest in them lay nearer his heart than his own; We are thy people, is a good plea, Isa. 63. 19; 64. 9. I am thine, save me. God's people are his inheritance, and precious in his eyes. He prays that God would save them. That he would bless them with all good. That he would feed them; bless them with plenty, and especially the plenty of his ordinances, which are food to the soul. Rule them; so the margin. Direct their counsels and actions, and overrule their affairs for good. That he would lift them up for ever; not only those of that age, but his people in every age to come. Lift them up into thy glorious kingdom, lift them up as high as heaven. There, and there only, will the saints be lifted up for ever, never more to sink, or be depressed. But what are all the sudden transitions from deep distress to joyful praises, which take place in the believer's experience here, compared with what each one finds, when in a moment he exchanges the agonies of death for heavenly joys?

Observe, those, and those only, whom God feeds and rules, who are willing to be taught, and guided, and governed, by him, shall be saved, and blessed, and lifted up for ever.

Save us, O Lord Jesus, from our sins; bless us; O thou Son of Abraham, with the blessing of righteousness; feed us, O thou good Shepherd of the sheep, and lift us up for ever from the dust, O thou, who art the resurrection and the life.—(32.)

8. "The strength of his people."—*Kommt.*

PSALM XXIX.

It is the conjecture of some very good interpreters, that David penned this psalm upon the occasion of some awful storm. It is good to take occasion, from the sensible operations of God's power in the kingdom of nature, to give glory to him. Though the earth be removed, yet David will not fear. He calls upon the great ones of the world to give glory to God, ver. 1, 2. To convince them of the greatness of that God whom they were to adore, he takes notice of his power and terror in the thunder, and lightning, and thunder-showers, ver. 3—9; his dominion over the world, ver. 10; and his special favour to his church, ver. 11.

The mighty and honourable of the earth derive all their power, and splendour from the eternal Jehovah, and are pecu-

David was in, and of the workings of his heart toward God in each. In the first, we may see what we are too apt to be, and in the other two, what we should be.

1. He had long enjoyed prosperity, and then he grew secure, ver. 6, 7. He thought his prosperity fixed; yet this he ascribes, not to his own wisdom or fortitude, but to the Divine goodness, ver. 7. He does not look upon it as his heaven, as worldly people do, but only as his mountain. It is earth still, only raised a little higher than the common level; but this he thought, by the favour of God, would be perpetuated to him; imagining, perhaps, that, having had so many troubles in the beginning of his days, he should have none in his latter end. We are very apt to dream, when things are well with us, that they will always be so. When we see ourselves deceived in our expectations, it becomes us to reflect, with shame, upon our security, as our folly, as David does here; that we may be wiser, and rejoice in our prosperity as though we rejoiced not, because the fashion of it passes away.

2. He fell into trouble; then he prayed to God, and pleaded earnestly for relief and succour. His mountain was shaken, and he with it; it proved, that when he grew secure he was least safe. Yet, as he ascribed his prosperity to God's favour, so, in his adversity, he observed the hiding of God's face to be the cause of it. If God hide his face, a good man is certainly troubled, though no other calamity befall him. But when his mountain was shaken, he lifted up his eyes above the hills. Prayer is a salve for every sore; he made use of it accordingly. If God, in wisdom and justice, turn from us, yet it will be the greatest folly, if we turn from him. No, let us learn to pray in the dark, ver.

8. God's withdrawals made his prayers the more vehement. We are here told what he pleaded, ver. 9. We should entreat God that we may not close our lives under his frown, in a way dishonourable to his name, or unprofitable to our brethren. The sanctified spirit, which returns to God, shall praise him, shall be still praising him; but the services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust; it cannot praise him; there is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence. The best pleas in prayer, are taken from God's honour; we ask aright for life, when we have in view, that we may live and praise him.

He prayed for mercy to pardon, ver. 10, and for grace to help in time of need. On these two errands we also may come boldly to the throne of grace, Heb. 4. 16.

3. In due time God delivered him out of his troubles. His prayers were answered, ver. 11. His fears were silenced; his comforts returned; and joy was made his strength. But what temper of mind was he in, upon this happy change? He tells us, ver. 12, his complaints were turned into praises. Our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when employed in praising God; or his soul; for that is our glory above the beasts. They that are kept from being silent in the pit, must not be silent in the land of the living. These praises were likely to be everlasting. He would persevere to the end in praising God, hoping that he should never want fresh matter for praise, and that he should shortly be there where this would be the everlasting work. Blessed are they that dwell in God's house; they will be still praising him. Thus must we accommodate ourselves to the various providences of God that concern us.

But let all beware of unwarranted confidence, and carnal security. Neither outward prosperity nor inward peace, here are immovable. The Lord in his favour has fixed the believer's safety firm as the deep-rooted mountains, but in every thing else he must expect to be shaken, and to meet with temptations and afflictions. When we grow careless, we fall into sin, the Lord hides his face, our comforts droop, and troubles assail.

Theodoret, and others of the ancient fathers, considered that this psalm referred to the resurrection of Christ's body from the grave.

PSALM XXXI.

This psalm consists of prayers, praises, and professions of confidence in God, all which help one another. (1.) David professes cheerful confidence in God, and, in that confidence, prays for deliverance out of his present troubles, ver. 1—8. (2.) He complains of the deplorable condition he was in; and, in the sense of his calamities, still prays that God would graciously appear for him against his persecutors, ver. 9—18. (3.) He concludes the psalm with praise and triumph, giving glory to God, and encouraging himself and others to trust in him, ver. 19—24.

* Ver. 1—8. Faith and prayer must go together, for the prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer. We have both here. David, in distress, is very earnest with God, in prayer, for succour and relief. This eases a burdened spirit, brings in promised mercies, and wonderfully supports and comforts the soul, in the expectation of them. He prays that God would deliver him, ver. 1. That if he did not immediately deliver him, yet he would shelter him in his troubles, ver. 2; that he might be under the Divine guidance, ver. 3. And that God would frustrate and baffle the designs of his enemies, v. 4.

In this prayer, he gives glory to God, by a repeated profession of his confidence in him, and dependence on him. If God be our Strength, we may hope that he will put his strength in us, and put forth his strength for us.

He gave up his soul in a special manner to him, ver. 5, Into thine hands I commit my spirit. If David here looks upon himself as a dying man, by these words he resigns his departing soul to God who gave it, and to whom, at death, the spirit returns. With these words, our Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost upon the cross, and made his soul an offering, a free-will offering for sin, voluntarily laying down his life a ransom. By Stephen's example we are taught, in our dying moments to behold Christ at God's right hand, and to commit our spirits to him; Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. But David is here to be looked upon as a man in distress and trouble. And his great care is about his soul, his spirit, his better part. Note; Our outward afflictions should increase our concern for our souls. Many think that while perplexed about their worldly affairs, and Providence multiplies cares about them, they may be excused, if they neglect their souls; whereas the greater hazard our lives and secular interests are in, the more we are concerned to look to our souls, that, though the outward man perish, the inward man may suffer no damage, 2 Cor. 4. 16. He thinks the best he can do for his soul, is, to commit it into the hand of God, and lodge that great trust with him. He had prayed, ver. 4, to be plucked out of the net of outward trouble, but he immediately lets fall that petition, and commits the spirit, the inward man, into God's hand; Lord, however it goes with me, as to my body, let it go well with my

soul. It is the wisdom and duty of every one solemnly to commit his spirit into the hands of God, to be sanctified by his grace, employed in his service, and fitted for his kingdom. The redemption of the soul is so precious, that it must have ceased for ever, if Christ had not undertaken it; but, by redeeming our souls, he has showed the extraordinary kindness and concern he has for them, which encourages us to commit them to him, to be preserved to his heavenly kingdom, 2 Tim. 1. 12; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth; redeemed me according to a promise which thou wilt be true to.

David disclaimed all confederacy with those who made an arm of flesh their confidence, ver. 6; lying vanities he could not depend upon, but trusted in the Lord only: see 40. 4; Jer. 17. 5. He comforted himself with his hope in God, ver. 7. Having relied on God's mercy, he will be glad and rejoice in it; those know not how to value their hope in God, who cannot find joy enough in that hope, to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs.

He encouraged himself in this hope, with the experiences he had had, of late, and formerly, of God's goodness to him. God looks upon our souls, when we are in trouble, to see whether they are humbled for sin, submissive, and bettered by the affliction. If the soul, when cast down under affliction, has been lifted up to him in true devotion, he knows it. David had frequently been enclosed, yet he had been set at liberty, ver. 8, and every believer will meet with such dangers and deliverances until he be finally delivered from death, his last enemy.

Christ's using the words, ver. 5, upon the cross, may warrant us to apply all this to Christ, who trusted in his Father, and was supported and delivered by him, and, because he humbled himself, was highly exalted, and enlarged at his resurrection.

Ver. 9—18. David's troubles had fixed a very deep impression upon his mind, and made him a man of sorrows. So great was his grief, that his very soul was consumed with it, and his life spent with it, ver. 9, 10. Herein, he was a type of Christ, who was intimately acquainted with grief.

His body was affected with the sorrows

of his mind, ver. 10; and the sense of sin touched him to the quick, and wasted him more than all his calamities. David acknowledged that his afflictions were merited by his own iniquity. Christ suffered for ours. David's friends durst not harbour him, nor give him any assistance, ver. 11. Let those that fall, not think it strange, if they be thus deserted, but make sure of a Friend in heaven, that will not fail them, and make use of him. His enemies were unjust in their censures of him. The best of men have been ranked with the worst, by those that resolved to give them the worst treatment.

David's life was aimed at. Thus, in all the plots against Christ, the design was to take away his life. Observe his confidence in God, in the midst of these troubles, ver. 14. His enemies robbed him of his reputation among men, but they could not rob him of his comfort in God, because they could not drive him from his confidence in God. It is a great support to those who have God for their God, that their times are in his hand; and he will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best, to all those who commit their spirits also into his hand, to suit them to their times, as David here, ver. 5. The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, imbitter or sweeten, according to the counsel of his will. Our times, all events that concern us, and the timing of them, are at God's disposal; the way of man is not in himself, nor in our friends' hands, nor in our enemies' hands, but in God's. Especially we should look unto Jesus, who was divinely wise, holy, and merciful; yet was more hated, and suffered more than we can. Let us follow his example, remembering that our times are in his hand.

In this faith and confidence he prays that God would deliver him, ver. 15, and save him, ver. 16, for his mercies' sake, and not for any merit of his own. Our opportunities are in God's hand; he knows the best and fittest time for our deliverance, and we must be willing to wait that time.

He prays that God would give him the comfort of his favour in the mean time, ver. 16. That his prayers might be answered, and his hopes in God accomplished, ver. 17. That shame and silence might be the portion of wicked people, and particularly of his enemies. In the grave, the wicked cease from troubling.

Particularly, he prays for, that is, he prophesies the silencing those that reproach and calumniate the people of God, ver. 18. God has many ways of doing it. Sometimes he convinces the consciences of those that reproach his people, and turns their hearts; sometimes by his providence he visibly confutes their calumnies, and brings forth the righteousness of his people as the light. However, there is a day coming, when God will execute judgment upon them, Jude 14, 15. In the mean time we should engage ourselves by well-doing, if possible, to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. 2. 15.

Ver. 19—24. Instead of yielding to impatience or dependency under our troubles, we should turn our thoughts to the surprising goodness of the Lord towards those who fear and trust in Him. Those who are interested in this goodness, are described to be such as fear God, and trust in him, as stand in awe of his greatness, and rely on his grace. This goodness is laid up for them, and wrought for them. If what is laid up for us in the treasures of this everlasting covenant, be not wrought for us, it is our own fault; because we do not believe. Every deliverance wrought for them on earth, is an earnest of their final redemption from the grave, and admission to the inheritance reserved in heaven for them; all comes to sinners through the wondrous gift of the only begotten Son of God, to be the propitiation for their sins. While their treasure is safely laid up for them, they are kept under the protection of the Almighty, as in a strong city, through faith unto salvation. The pride of men endangers their liberty; the strife of tongues in perverse disputings, endangers truth. But God's providence shall keep them safe from the malice of their enemies. Let not any yield to unbelief, or conclude under discouraging circumstances, that they are cut off from before the eyes of the Lord. He mentions his own unbelief as a foil to God's fidelity, serving to make his loving kindness the more marvellous. When a distressed God, he might have justly taken us at our word, and have brought our tears upon us. But he has pitied and pardoned us, and our unbelief has not made his promise and grace of none effect; for he knows our frame. Let us ask, and the Lord will deliver; surely we should be willing to

pass to glory the same way that our Forerunner went. Jesus will receive the souls, and raise the bodies of his people, and bring them to be ever with him in glory. Let then all his saints, who are saved by his mercy and upheld by his arm, daily learn to love and praise the Lord; patiently to suffer, and courageously to venture for his sake. Those that have their own hearts full of love to God, cannot but desire that others also may love him. He will comfort and strengthen the hearts of all who hope in him; while the proud despiser of the gospel, and the persecutor of God's people, meets an abundant recompense of his evil deeds. Lord, pardon our complaints and fears; increase our faith, patience, love, and gratitude; teach us to rejoice in tribulation and in hope.

Whoever shall consider the troubles of the beloved Son of God, bereaved for a season of the light of heaven, only that it might afterwards rise upon him with the greater lustre, will be taught never to faint under the chastisement of the Lord. The deliverance of Christ, with the destruction of his enemies, ought to strengthen and comfort the hearts of believers under all their afflictions here below, that having suffered courageously with their Master, they may triumphantly enter into his joy and glory.—(32.)

PSALM XXXII.

The apostle says, that David, in this psalm, describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, Rom. 4. 6. (1.) He sets forth the happiness of a pardoned sinner, ver. 1, 2. (2.) For the encouragement of others, he shows the misery that preceded, and the comfort that followed the confession of sin, 3—7. (3.) He instructs and warns sinners to repent, and exhorts believers to rejoice in God, 8—11.

Ver. 1, 2. We are here instructed concerning the nature of the pardon of sin; this we all need, we are undone without it; we are therefore concerned to be very solicitous for it. It is forgiving transgression, ver. 1. Sin is the only cause of our misery; forgiveness is the beginning of a sinner's happiness; the true believer's transgressions of the Divine law are all forgiven, being covered with the atonement; Christ bare his iniquities,

therefore they are not imputed to him. The remission of sins gives rest and relief to those that were weary and heavy-laden, Matt. 11. 28. Sin makes us loathsome in the sight of God, and utterly unfit for communion with him; when conscience is awakened, it makes us loathsome to ourselves too; but when it is pardoned, it is covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, so that God is no longer displeased with us, but perfectly reconciled. They are not covered from us; no, My sin is ever before me; nor covered from God's omniscience, but from his justice: when he pardons sin, he remembers it no more, he casts it behind his back, it shall be sought for, and not found. The sinner, being thus reconciled to God, begins to be reconciled to himself. It is the not imputing of iniquity, not laying it to the sinner's charge, not proceeding against him for it, according to the strictness of the law, not dealing with him as he deserves. The righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, and we being made the righteousness of God in him, our iniquity is not imputed, God having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and made him sin for us. Observe; not to impute iniquity, is God's act, for he is the Judge. It is God that justifies.

Notice the character of him whose sins are pardoned, in whose spirit there is no guile; in his professions of repentance and faith, and in his prayers for peace or pardon, in all these, he is sincere. He is before God the same that he appears to be before men; a sinner trusting in his mercy through the atoning blood of Christ, seeking sanctification by the power of the Holy Ghost. He does not profess to repent with an intention to sin again; nor indulge in sin because God is ready to forgive. He cannot abuse the doctrine of free grace.

Observe the happiness of a justified state; blessednesses are to the man whose iniquity is forgiven, all manner of blessings, sufficient to make him completely blessed. That is taken away, which incurred the curse, and obstructed the blessing. The forgiveness of sin is the article of the covenant, which is the ground of all the rest; For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, Heb. 8. 12.

Ver. 3—7. The condition of an unhumiliated sinner, that sees his guilt, but is

not yet brought to make a penitent confession of it, David describes from his own sad experience, ver. 3, 4. Those may be said to keep silence who stifle their convictions, who, when they cannot but see the evil of sin, and their danger by reason of it, try to ease themselves by not thinking of it, and diverting their minds to something else.

Pride, unbelief, enmity to God's holiness, and aversion to spiritual things, keep even convinced sinners silent, though with hearts full of anguish, which often leads to desperation. It is very difficult to bring sinful man to humble acceptance of free mercy in unreserved confession of sins, and self-condemnation.

If conscience be seared, the case is the more dangerous; but if it be startled and awake, it will be heard. The hand of Divine wrath will be felt lying heavy upon the soul, and the anguish of the spirit will affect the body; to that degree David experienced it.

The true and only way to peace of conscience, is, to confess our sins, that they may be forgiven; to declare them, that we may be justified, ver. 5. Those that would have the comfort of the pardon of their sins must take shame to themselves by a penitent confession of them.

God is more ready to pardon sin, upon our repentance, than we are to repent. What an assurance does this give us, that, if we confess our sins, we shall find God, not only faithful and just, but gracious and kind, to forgive us our sins!

Although repentance and confession do not merit the pardon of transgression, they are indispensable to the real enjoyment of forgiving mercy. Hence the wisdom and grace of that arrangement which connects the manifestation of Divine forgiveness with the sorrows of penitence and the humble confession of iniquity before God. And what tongue can tell the happiness of that hour when the soul, oppressed by sin, is enabled freely to pour forth its sorrows before God, and to take hold of his covenanted mercy in Christ Jesus!—(47.)

We are to make good use of the experience David had of God's readiness to forgive his sins, ver. 6. All godly people are praying people. As soon as ever Paul was converted, Behold, he prays, Acts 9. 11. You may as soon find a living man without breath, as a living Christian without prayer. The instructions

given us concerning the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and the easiness of obtaining the pardon, should engage and encourage us to pray, to come boldly to the throne of grace, with hopes to obtain mercy, Heb. 4. 16. Those that would speed in prayer, must seek the Lord, when, by his providence, he calls them to seek him, and by his Spirit he stirs them up to seek him. Behold, now is the accepted time, 2 Cor. 6. 2. Those that are sincere and abundant in prayer, will find the benefit of it when they are in trouble.

The words, "In a time when thou mayest be found," mean literally, "In a time of finding," when the heart is softened with grief, and burdened with guilt; when all human refuge fails; when no rest can be found to the troubled mind, then it is that God applies the healing balm by his Spirit. Nor shall any of the sorrows of life, any of the great floods of affliction which roll in upon human beings, dislodge the pardoned and justified sinner, from that Rock of salvation, on which, through the riches of Divine grace, he has been immovably fixed.—(47.)

David speaks to God, and professes his confidence in him, and expectation from him, ver. 7. God keeps his people from trouble, by keeping them from sin.

The penitent, when happily returned to the house of his heavenly Father, esteems himself safe under his protection; resting in full assurance that all his sorrows shall one day be turned into joy, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.—(32.)

4. In the east, during summer, the whole face of a country is dried, and burned up in a manner, of which inhabitants of more temperate climates can form no idea. See note, 1 Kings 18. 5.

Ver. 8—11. David, being himself converted, does what he can to strengthen his brethren, Luke 22. 32. Those are best able to teach others the grace of God, who have themselves had the experience of it: and those who are themselves taught of God, ought to tell others what he has done for their souls, 66. 16, and so teach them. I will guide thee with mine eye, ver. 8. Apply it to God's conduct and direction. He teaches us by his word, and guides us with the secret intimations of his will in the turns of Providence which he enables us to take direction from; the Lord himself will guide every humble penitent.

David gives a word of caution to sinners,

ver. 9. The caution is, not to be unruly and ungovernable; it is our honour and happiness, that we have understanding, that we are capable of being governed by reason, and of reasoning with ourselves. Let us therefore use the faculties we have, and act rationally. Let us not be hurried by appetite and passion to go contrary to our true interest. The reason for this caution, is, because the way of sin will certainly end in sorrow. Sin will have everlasting sorrow, if it be not repented of.

Here is a word of comfort to saints. They are assured that if they will but trust in the Lord, and keep close to him, mercy shall compass them about on every side, ver. 10, so that they shall not depart from God, for that mercy shall keep them in; nor shall any real evil break in upon them, for that mercy shall keep it out. They are therefore commanded to be glad in the Lord, and to rejoice in him, ver. 11. Let them affect others with this holy joy, that they also may see that a life of communion with God, is the most pleasant and comfortable life we can live in this world.

In the beginning of this psalm, the penitent, smitten with the sense of his wretchedness on account of his sins, extolled the blessedness of the righteous. He again does the same in the end, through a joyful sense of his pardon, and restoration to that happy state. Let us rejoice, O Lord Jesus, in thee, and in thy salvation; so shall we rejoice indeed.—(82.)

PSALM XXXIII.

(1.) The psalmist calls upon the righteous to praise God, ver. 1—3, and furnishes matter for praise. We must praise God for his justice, goodness, and truth, appearing in his word, and in all his works, ver. 4, 5. For his power appearing in the work of creation, ver. 6—9. For the sovereignty of his providence in the government of the world, ver. 10, 11. (2.) He speaks of the blessedness of God's people, ver. 12, and again sets forth his sovereignty, ver. 13—17, as encouragement for them to trust in Him, 18—22.

Ver. 1—11. The psalmist expresses in these verses the great desire he had that God might be praised. Holy joy is the heart and soul of praise, and that is here pressed upon all good people, ver. 1. Thankful praise is the breath and lan-

guage of holy joy; and that also is here required of us, ver. 2. Religious songs are the proper expressions of thankful praise; those are here required, ver. 3; a new song for new mercies, and upon every new occasion, for those compassions which are new every morning. Here is a good rule for this duty; let it have the best both of head and heart; let it be done intelligently, and affectionately, and with a warm heart. Here is a good reason for this duty. It is well-pleasing to God; it becomes the upright to give honour to him. The upright praise God with their hearts.

It is becoming to such persons to abound in cheerful praises, it is suited to their character, it adorns their profession, and is honourable to God. But the joy of the hypocrite springs from presumption; his praises are an offence to the Lord. Every endowment we possess should be employed with all our skill and earnestness in God's service.

God makes himself known to us in his word, ver. 4, 5; here put for all Divine revelation, all that which God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the children of men; and his commands exactly agree with the rules of equity, and the eternal reasons of good and evil. His promises are all wise and good. God's word is right, and therefore all our deviations from it are wrong, and we are only in the right when we agree with it. His works are all done in truth, all according to his counsels, which are called the scriptures of truth, Dan. 10. 21. God has made it to appear in his works that he is a God of inflexible justice. He never did nor can do wrong to any of his creatures. He is himself the righteous Lord, and therefore loveth righteousness. He is a God of inexhaustible bounty; the earth is full of his goodness, that is, of the proofs and instances of it; the darkest, the coldest, the hottest, and the most dry and desert part of it not excepted. What pity it is that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness, should be so empty of his praises; and that of the multitudes that live upon his bounty, there are so few that live to his glory!

Observe how God made the world, and brought all things into being. How easily: All things were made by the word of the Lord, and by the breath of his mouth, ver. 6; Christ is the Word, the Spirit is the Breath, so that God the Fa-

ther made the world, as he rules it, and redeems it by his Son and Spirit. He spake, and he commanded, ver. 9, and that was enough. What cannot that power do, which with a word made a world! How effectually it was done!—and it stood fast. What God does, he does to purpose; he does it, and it stands fast.

He made all things; notice is here taken of the heavens, and the host of them, ver. 6. Of the waters, and the treasures of them, ver. 7. What use is to be made of this is shown, ver. 8. Let all the earth fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him, that is, Let all the children of men worship him, and give glory to him.

The satisfaction the psalmist had in God's sovereignty and dominion is shown, ver. 10, 11. He overrules all the counsels of men, and makes them serviceable to his counsels. Come and see God frustrating the devices of his enemies, and fulfilling his own decrees. Through all the revolutions of time God never changed his measures, but in every event, even that which to us is most surprising, the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled, nor can any thing prevent its being accomplished in its times. His word will be equally powerful when he shall command the destruction of his enemies, and such are all they who will not have the Saviour to reign over them.

Ver. 12—22. The children of men are all under the eye of God; all the motions and operations of their souls, which no mortals know but they themselves, he knows better than they themselves, ver. 13, 14. He not only beholds them, but he looks narrowly upon them, so the word here used is sometimes rendered, so narrowly that not the least thought can escape his observation. All the power and policy of man are of no effect against the Almighty will of God.

Their hearts, as well as their times, are all in his hand; he made them at first, formed the spirit of each man within him. He still moulds the hearts of men, turns them which way soever he pleases. He that fashions men's hearts, fashions them alike. It is in hearts as in faces, though there is such a variety that no two are exactly of the same features, nor any two hearts exactly of the same temper, yet there is such a similitude, that, in some things, all faces and all hearts agree. They, and all they do, are subject to his

judgment. All the powers of the creature have a dependence upon him, and are of no account, of no avail at all, without him, ver. 16, 17.

The strength of a king is nothing without God; for the powers that he, are ordained of God, and are what he makes them, and no more. The strength of an army is nothing without God. A great army cannot be sure of victory; for when God pleases, one shall chase a thousand. The strength of a giant is nothing without God; a mighty man, such as Goliath was, is not delivered by his much strength. Let not the strong man, then, glory in his strength, but let us all strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God, go forth, and go on in his strength. The strength of a horse is nothing without God. It is our interest to make sure God's favour towards us, then we may be sure of his power engaged for us, and need not fear whatever is against us.

We are to give God the glory of his special grace. In the midst of the psalmist's acknowledgments of God's providence, he pronounces those blessed, who have Jehovah for their God, who governs the world, and helps them in every time of need, ver. 12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, even Israel, who had the knowledge of the true God; and all others who are owned by him, whatever nation they are of, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. It is their wisdom that they trust the Lord for their God, that they direct their homage and adoration where it is due. It is their happiness that they are the people whom God has chosen for his own, whom he cultivates and improves as a man does his inheritance, Deut. 32.

Now let us observe here, to the honour of Divine grace, the regard which God has to his people, ver. 18, 19. God beholds all the sons of men with an eye of observation, but his eye of favour is upon them that fear him; he looks upon them with delight, as the father on his children. All human devices are ineffectual for the salvation of our souls; but the Lord's watchful eye is over those whose conscientious fear of his name proceeds from a believing hope in his mercy through the great Redeemer. He will preserve their lives, and supply their temporal wants, as far as is good for them. He will feed their souls, and preserve them from eternal death. They that have the

Lord for their God, shall find him their help, and their shield, ver. 20. In their difficulties he will assist them, they shall be helped over them, helped through them; in dangers he will secure them, they shall not receive any real damage.

Observe the regard which God's people have to him. We must wait for God. Our souls must wait for him, ver. 20, we must not only in word and tongue profess a believing regard to God, but it must be inward and sincere. We must rely on God; hope in his mercy, in the goodness of his nature, though we have not an express promise to depend upon. They that fear God and his wrath, must hope in God and his mercy; for there is no flying from God, but by flying to him. We must rejoice in God, ver. 21. Those do not truly rest in God, or do not know the unspeakable advantage they have by so doing, who do not rejoice in him at all times. We must seek to him for that mercy which we hope in, ver. 22. Our expectations from God are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage our applications to him; he will be sought unto for that which he has promised.

The psalm ends with prayer, Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us; let us always have the comfort and benefit of it, not according as we merit from thee, but according as we hope in thee, according to the promise which thou hast in thy word given to us, and according to the faith which thou hast by thy Spirit and grace wrought in us.

The righteous here declare their fixed resolution to persevere in faith and patience, waiting for the coming of their Lord and Saviour; the hope of the church was always in him. Of old she prayed for the mercy of his first coming, now she expects the second. Grant us, O Lord, hope of which we may never be disappointed.—(32.) For his mercy will surely be upon us, according as we hope in him.

25. "He only fashioned their hearts." Ainsworth.

PSALM XXXIV.

This psalm was penned upon a particular occasion, as appears by the title, and yet there is little in it but what is general, both by way of thanksgiving to God, and instruction to us. (1.) David praises God for the experience he and others had had of his goodness, ver. 1—6. He

encourages all good people to trust in God, and to seek to him, ver. 7—10. (2.) He gives good counsel to all, as unto children, to take heed of sin, and to make consciences of duty both to God and man, ver. 11—14. To enforce this good counsel, he shows God's favour to the righteous, and his displeasure against the wicked, in which he sets before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse, ver. 15—22.

Title. Achish probably was the name, Abimelech the title of the king of Gath.

Ver. 1—10. David excites himself to praise God. Though it was his fault that he changed his behaviour, yet it was God's mercy that he escaped. He resolves that he will praise God constantly. If we hope to spend our eternity in praising God, it is fit that we should spend as much as may be of our time in this work. That he will praise him openly. Thus he would own his obligations to the mercy of God, and be desirous to make others also sensible of theirs. That he will praise him heartily. It is not vain glory to glory in the Lord.

He calls upon others to join with him herein. He expects they will. Those have most comfort in God's mercies, both to others and to themselves, that are humble, and have the least confidence in their own merit and sufficiency. He would have all concur with him in great and high thoughts of God, ver. 3.

We have reason to join in thanksgiving to God, for his readiness to hear prayer. He never said to any one, Seek ye me in vain. David's prayers helped to silence his fears; having sought the Lord, and left his case with him, he could with great composure wait the event. Many beside him have looked unto God by faith and prayer, and have been lightened by it, ver. 5. It has wonderfully revived and comforted them. When we look to the world, we are darkened, we are perplexed, and at a loss; but when we look to God, from him we have the light of direction and joy, and our way is made both plain and pleasant.

That it is Christ, or the glory of God in him, which is thus looked unto, will not be denied. And it is their faith which is expressed by their looking unto him; which is an act of trust arising from an apprehension of who and what he is. The effect is, that they were lightened, that they received fresh communication of spi-

ritual, saving, refreshing light from him, and consequently of all other graces; hence their faith was not ashamed; nor shall we fail in expectation of spiritual communications in the exercise of the same faith. On this look to Christ, on this view of his glory, depends our whole salvation, and therefore all things needful thereunto, do so also. This is the direction given by the Holy Ghost for attaining them.—(62.)

“This poor man cried,” ver. 6, a person mean and inconsiderable, whom no man looked upon with any respect, or looked after with any concern, was welcome to the throne of grace; the Lord heard him, took cognizance of his case, and of his prayers, and saved him out of all his troubles, ver. 6. God will regard the prayer of the destitute, 102. 17: see Isa. 57. 15.

The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear God. The holy angels do us more good offices every day, than we are aware of. Though they have constant employment in praising God, yet, in obedience to their Maker, they minister to the saints, and stand up for them against the powers of darkness; they not only visit them, but encamp round about them, acting for their good really, though not visibly. All the glory be to the God of the angels.

The Divine protection and salvation vouchsafed to the faithful is here signified, whether by the angel of Jehovah is meant the presence of Christ in the church, as of old in the camp of Israel; or the ministration of created spirits to the heirs of salvation, as in the case of Elisha, 2 Kings 6. 17.—(63.)

David invites others to join him in kind and good thoughts of God, ver. 8. By taste and sight we both make discoveries, and take complacency. Taste, and see God's goodness; take notice of it, and take the comfort of it, 1 Pet. 2. 3. He is good, for he makes all truly blessed that trust in him; let us be so convinced of his goodness, as to be encouraged in the worst of times to trust in him.

To encourage us to fear God and seek him, it is promised that those who do so, even in this wanting world, shall want no good thing. As to the things of the other world, they shall have grace sufficient for the support of the spiritual life, 2 Cor. 12. 9. Ps. 84. 11. And as to this life, they shall have what is necessary to the support of it, from the hand of God.

As a Father, he will feed them with food convenient; what further comforts they desire, they shall have, as far as infinite Wisdom sees good, and what they want in one thing, shall be made up in another. What God denies them, he will give them grace to be content without, and then they do not want it, Deut. 3. 26. Paul had all, and abounded, because he was content, Phil. 4. 11, 18. Those that live by faith in God's all-sufficiency, want nothing; for in him they have enough. They that live upon common providence, as the lions do, shall want that satisfaction which those have who live by faith in the promise. They that trust to themselves, and think their own hands sufficient for them, shall want, for bread is not always to the wise; but verily they shall be fed, that trust in God, and desire to be at his finding. They that are ravenous, and prey upon all about them, shall want, but the meek shall inherit the earth; they shall not want, who with quietness work and mind their own business.

10. The Greek version is, “Rich men become poor, and suffer hunger.” This is supported by the other versions. In the Hebrew the words “lions” and “mighty” differ only in a single letter.

Ver. 11—22. Observe what the psalmist undertakes to teach—The fear of the Lord: this includes all the duties of religion. We should be solicitous both to learn it ourselves, and to teach our children.

Let young persons set out in life with learning the fear of the Lord, if they desire true comfort here, and eternal happiness hereafter. They will be the happiest, who begin the soonest to serve so good a Master. Let them attend to Him who speaketh unto them as unto children, that they may have the true fear of God.

He supposes that all aim to be happy, ver. 12. But this must look further than time and this present world; for man's life on earth, at best, consists but of few days, and those full of trouble. What man is he that would be eternally happy; that would see good in that world where all bliss is in perfection; who would see good before him now, by faith and hope, and enjoy it shortly? Alas, very few have that in their thoughts.

He prescribes the true and only way to happiness, both in this world and that to come, ver. 13, 14. That religion promises best which begins with the conscience, and creates a watchfulness over the heart and over the tongue. We must depart

from evil, from evil works and evil workers; from the sins others commit, and which we have formerly allowed ourselves in. It is not enough not to do hurt in the world, but we must study to be useful, and to live to some purpose. Do good for ourselves, especially for our own souls; and, as we have ability and opportunity, to others also. Because nothing is more contrary to that love which never fails, which is the summary both of law and gospel, both of grace and glory, than strife and contention, we must seek peace, and pursue it; we must show a peaceable disposition; follow peace with all men, spare no pains, no expense, to preserve and recover peace, be willing to deny ourselves a great deal, both in honour and interest, for peace' sake. These directions in the way to life and good, are made part of gospel duty, 1 Pet. 3. 10, 11.

He enforces these directions by setting forth the happiness of the godly in the love and favour of God, and the miserable state of the wicked under his displeasure. Here are life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, plainly stated before us, that we may choose life, and live: see Isa. 3. 10, 11. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, ver. 16. Ruin is before them. When God sets his face against them, he shall not only cut them off, but cut off the remembrance of them; bury them in obscurity, in oblivion. It is certain that there is no lasting honour but that which comes from God. There shall be a sting in their death, ver. 21, though they die in a bed of down, or in the bed of honour. They shall be desolate, shall be ever forsaken and abandoned of God, and all good angels and men, and those that are so, are desolate indeed. Yet, say to the righteous, it shall be well with them; all good people are under God's special favour and protection. We are here assured of that, under a great variety of instances.

God takes special notice of those who have their eyes ever to him, and make conscience of their duty to him, ver. 15; to direct and guide them; to protect and keep them. Parents that are very fond of a child, will not let it be out of their sight; none of God's children are ever from under his eye. They are sure of an answer of peace to their prayers. All God's people are a praying people, and they cry in prayer, which denotes great importunity. Though he has been a God

that heareth prayer, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, yet his ear is not heavy. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, ver. 17. This intimates that it is the constant practice of good people, when they are in distress, to cry unto God, and it is their constant comfort that God hears them. He not only takes notice of what we say, but is ready for our relief, ver. 18. It is the character of the righteous, that they are of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, that is, humbled for sin, and emptied of self; they are low in their own eyes, and have no confidence in their own merit and sufficiency, but in God only. Those who are so, have God nigh unto them to comfort and support them, that the spirit may not be broken more than is meet, lest it should fail before him: see Isa. 57. 15. Nothing is more essential to true godliness than a contrite heart, broken off from every self-confidence, and self-preference, humbled into the dust of self-abasement. In this soil every grace will flourish, and to this person, nothing can give encouragement but the free rich grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They are taken under the special protection of the Divine government, ver. 20; He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken. This scripture is said to be fulfilled in Christ, John 19. 36; the promises being made good to Christ, through him are sure to all the seed. It does not follow but that a good man may have a broken bone; but, by the watchful providence of God concerning him, it is often wonderfully prevented. He that accomplished the prophecies concerning the Saviour, will take equal care of all his faithful servants. They are, and shall be delivered out of their troubles. It is supposed that they have their share of crosses in this world, perhaps a greater share than others. In the world they must have tribulation, that they may be conformed both to the will of God, and to the example of Christ, ver. 19. There are those that hate them, ver. 21; between the mercy of Heaven, and the malice of hell, the afflictions of the righteous must needs be many. God has engaged for their deliverance and salvation, so that though they may fall into trouble, it shall not be their ruin. This promise of their deliverance is explained, ver. 22. Whatever troubles befall them, they shall not hurt their better part. God keeps them from sinning

in troubles, which would do them mischief. No man is desolate, but he whom God has forsaken, nor is any undone till he is in hell. The Lord will redeem his people from hell, and from the grave, and will not forsake them that trust in him.

22. It is supposed by many that this verse should stand between ver. 5 and 6, the regular alphabetical series of the verses is thereby rendered complete, and the passage is more forcible. It is so in many manuscripts.—See *A. Clarke*.

PSALM XXXV.

This psalm represents Christ's contest with his adversaries, when about to do their worst against him and his kingdom. He denounces the hottest wrath of God against them for their everlasting overthrow, set forth under the shadow of David's contest with his irreconcilable enemies. (1.) He prays to God to arise for him, ver. 1—3, and proceed against his despiteful enemies, ver. 4—8, which as it may comfort the supplicant, shall also serve for God's glory, ver. 9, 10. (2.) The main reason of his petitions is the unjust and ungrateful conduct of his enemies to him, ver. 11—16. (3.) He renews his petition, ver. 17—19, pressing his former reasons from the enemies' unjust and insolent disposition, ver. 20, 21, and then again renews his petition for himself against his enemies, ver. 22—26, and for all the favourers of his cause, ver. 27, 28.—(18.)

Ver. 1—10. In these verses, we have David's representation of his case to God, setting forth the restless rage and malice of his persecutors; he was God's servant, and aimed at his glory in the way of duty, and yet there were those, ver. 1, who not only undermined him secretly, but openly avowed their opposition, and set themselves to do him all the mischief they could. They persecuted him with an unwearied enmity, sought after his life, ver. 4. It is no new thing for the most righteous men, and the most righteous cause, to meet with many mighty and malicious enemies: Christ himself is striven with, and fought against, and war made upon the holy seed; it is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent, against the Seed of the woman.

David in his afflictions; Christ in his passion; the church under persecution; and the christian in the hour of temptation, all supplicate the Almighty to appear

in their behalf, and to vindicate their cause.—(32.)

David appeals to God concerning his integrity, and the justice of his cause. A righteous cause may, with the greatest satisfaction, be laid before a righteous God, and referred to him to give judgment upon it; for he perfectly knows the merits of it, and with him there is no respect of persons. We are apt to justify our uneasiness at the injuries men do us, by this, That we never gave them any cause, to use us so; whereas this should, more than any thing, make us easy, for then we may the more confidently expect that God will plead our cause.

He prayed to God to manifest himself in his trial. 1. *For* him; he prays that God would disable his enemies from hurting him, and defeat their designs. We may pray against our persecutors, that God would restrain them, and stop their way. 2. *To* him; Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation; let me have inward comfort under all these outward troubles, to support my soul. Let God not only be my Saviour out of present troubles, but my everlasting bliss. And let me know it; let me have the comfortable assurance of it in my own breast. If God, by his Spirit, witness to our spirits that he is our salvation, we need desire no more to make us happy; and this is a powerful support when men persecute us. If God be our Friend, no matter who is our enemy.

By the spirit of prophecy, he foretells the just judgments of God, that would come upon his enemies for their great wickedness, and especially their enmity to the counsel of God, and the interests of religion. David, it is probable, knew that God had rejected Saul, and had forbidden Samuel to mourn for him, 1 Sam. 16. 1. And these predictions look further, and read the doom of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, as appears by comparing Rom. 11. 9, 10. We must not desire of pray for the ruin of any of our enemies, except our lust, and those evil spirits that would compass our destruction.

The Jews, separated from the church and people of Christ, become useless and unprofitable to any good work, possessing only the empty ceremonies and husks of their religion, and by the breath of the Divine displeasure scattered over the earth, afford a striking comment on verse 5, and as striking an admonition to every opposer of the Lord Jesus. A traveller,

benighted in a bad road, is an expressive emblem of a sinner walking in the slippery and dangerous ways of temptation, ver. 6. Deliver us, O Lord, from all blindness; but especially from that which is judicial.—(32.)

His own deliverance, having committed his cause to God, he did not doubt of, ver. 9, 10. Joy in God, and in his salvation, is the only true solid satisfying joy. They whose souls are sorrowful in the Lord; who sow in tears, and sorrow after a godly sort, need not question but that in due time their souls shall be joyful in the Lord, for gladness is sown for them, and they shall at last enter into the joy of their Lord. He promised that then God should have the glory of it, ver. 10. He will praise God with all the strength and vigour of his soul.

There is something very striking in representing the bones, the strongest parts of the body, as making acknowledgment of the Divine interposition. All the members of our body should be so consecrated to God as to express his praise; the psalmist here proposes to serve and glorify God with all his strength. If such language may be applied to outward salvation, how much more it will apply to heavenly things in Christ Jesus.—(47.)

The Saviour's resurrection and exaltation ensures the believer's preservation unto eternal life. He will shortly change our vile bodies and make them like unto his glorious body, by his Almighty power; then all our bones shall as it were praise our Deliverer who hath rescued poor and needy sinners from sin, Satan, and death.

Ver. 11—16. See how much even the best men lie at the mercy of the worst, and what reason we have to acknowledge with thankfulness, the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men. This instance of the wrong done by David, was typical, and had its accomplishment in the Son of David, against whom false witnesses did arise, Matt. 26. 60. If we are at any time charged with what we are innocent of, let us not think it strange, as though some new thing happened to us: so persecuted they the prophets, even the great Prophet.

Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse; this was the character of David's enemies, ver. 12. This is to the spoiling of his soul; this base unkind usage robs him of his comfort more than

any thing else. He had deserved well of those that were now most bitter against him. Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom this world was very ungrateful, John 10. 32. David shows how tenderly he had behaved toward them in afflictions, ver. 13, 14. He prayed for them; he discovered not only the tender affection of a man, but the pious affection of a saint. He was concerned for their precious souls, and since he could not otherwise be helpful to them, he prayed to God for mercy and grace; and the prayers of one who had so great an interest in heaven, were of more value than perhaps they knew and considered. With his prayers he joined humiliation, thus expressing his grief, not only for their affliction, but for their sin. We ought to mourn for the sins of those that do not mourn for them themselves. We shall not lose by the good offices we have done to any, how ungrateful soever. David's prayer returned unto his own bosom.

In his adversity they rejoiced, ver. 15, 16; such has often been the hard fate of the best of men. The apostles were made a spectacle to the world. Well might he call them abjects, his name was torn with reproaches and false accusations. He was their sport at their feasts, and constantly the subject of ridicule, yet their contempt was united with the most cruel and desperate rage. But all this was more emphatically true of Christ, and the treatment he met with from the Jews, even from the most abject, the malefactor who reviled him from the cross. When believers consider the ingratitude, contempt, and hatred with which the holy Jesus was treated, they should marvel if the world hate them; if they are despised, and treated with indignity and ingratitude by those they have loved, and who even profess to serve God. Let us then learn to possess our souls in patience and meekness like David, or rather after Christ's example. If it have not the desired effect, still our prayer will bring blessings upon ourselves.

Ver. 17—28. David describes the injustice and malice of his persecutors, and pleads with God to protect him from them. They hated him without a cause. This is quoted, with application to Christ, and is said to be fulfilled in him, John 15. 25; They hated me without cause. They spake not peace. They were very proud and scornful, ver. 21. They re-

joined at his hurt, and magnified themselves against him, ver. 26. Thus when the Son of David was run down by the rulers, the people cried, Crucify him, crucify him. They set themselves against all that adhered to David, ver. 20; They devised deceitful matters, to ruin them that were quiet in the land. Note; 1. It is the character of the gods in the land, that they are the quiet in the land; that they live in all dutiful subjection to government and governors, in the Lord, and endeavour, as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men. 2. Though the people of God are, and study to be a quiet people, yet it has been the common practice of their enemies to devise deceitful matters against them.

God, who knows all things, knew he did not falsely accuse them, ver. 22. He prays earnestly to God, to appear graciously for him and his friends, that by his providence the struggle might issue to the honour and comfort of David, and to the confusion of his persecutors.

He prays that God would act for him, ver. 17. Rescue my soul from the destructions they are plotting against it. My soul is "my only one," (see margin,) therefore the greater is the shame if I neglect it, the greater the loss if I lose it: it is my only one, and therefore ought to be my darling, ought to be carefully protected and provided for. It is my soul that is in danger, Lord, rescue it; it does, in a peculiar manner, belong to the Father of spirits, therefore claim thine own; it is thine, save it! Lord, keep not silence, as if thou didst consent to what is done against me! Lord, be not far from me, ver. 22, as if I were a stranger that thou art not concerned for.

He prays that his enemies might not have cause to rejoice, ver. 19; and again, ver. 24; it would turn to the dishonour of God, and the reproach of his confidence in God; it would harden the hearts of his enemies in their wickedness, and would be a great discouragement to all that were friends to his righteous cause.

He prays that his friends might have cause to rejoice, and give glory to God, ver. 27. It is a great pleasure to all that are good, to see an honest man, and an honest cause prevail and prosper; and those that heartily espouse the interests of God's people, and are willing to take their lot with them, shall, in due time, shout for joy and be glad, for the right-

eous cause will, at length, be a victorious cause. The great God has pleasure in the prosperity, not only of his family, the church in general, but of every particular servant in his family; he delights not in their griefs; for he does not afflict willingly; we ought therefore to have pleasure in their prosperity, not to envy it.

He who hath exalted the once suffering Redeemer, will in due time appear for all his people: the roaring lion shall not destroy their souls any more than he could that of their Surety. They have intrusted their souls into his hands, they are one with him by faith, and are precious in his sight, and shall be rescued from destruction, that they may give thanks in the great congregation above. Let us remember that he hath pleasure in the prosperity of all his servants; that we may be speaking of his righteousness and praise all the day long, for it is a subject that will never be exhausted, not even by the endless praises of saints and angels.

PSALM XXXVI.

The psalmist complains of the malice of his enemies against him, but triumphs in the goodness of God to him. We are here led to consider, and it will do us good to consider seriously, (1.) The sinfulness of sin, and how mischievous it is, ver. 1—4. (2.) The goodness of God, and how gracious he is to all his creatures in general, ver. 5, 6. To his own people in a special manner, ver. 7—9. By this, the psalmist is encouraged to pray for all the saints, ver. 10, for himself in particular, and his own preservation, ver. 11, and to triumph in the certain fall of his enemies, ver. 12. From this psalm our hearts should be duly affected with the hatred of sin, and have satisfaction in God's loving-kindness.

Ver. 1—4. Here is the root of bitterness, from which all the wickedness of the wicked comes. It takes rise from their contempt of God, and the want of a due regard to him. The wicked did not openly renounce the fear of God, but their transgression whispered it secretly into the minds of all that knew the nature of piety and impiety. Also from their conceit of themselves, and the deceit they put upon their own souls. Let us daily beg of God to preserve us from self-flattery, and to bring us acquainted with our own

characters. Sinners are self-destroyers, by being self-flatterers; Satan could not deceive them, if they did not deceive themselves. But the day is coming, when the sinner will be undeceived, when his iniquity shall be found to be hateful. Iniquity is hurtful to the sinner himself, and therefore ought to be hateful; but it is not so; yet when their consciences are convinced, and sin appears in its true colours, when it makes them a terror to themselves, then their iniquity will be found hateful, and their self-flattery their unspeakable folly, and an aggravation of their condemnation, ver. 2.

Here are the cursed branches which spring from this root of bitterness. The sinner defies God, and flatters himself, and then what can be expected? These were the first inlets of sin. Men do not fear God, and therefore they flatter themselves, and then they make no conscience of what they say. It is no marvel, if those that deceive themselves, contrive how to deceive all mankind; for whom will they be true to, that are false to their own souls? What little good there has been in them, is gone; they have shaken off their religion, and therewith their wisdom. They that leave off to do good, leave off to be wise.

Having left off to do good, they contrive to do hurt, v. 4. Omissions make way for commissions; when men leave off doing good, leave off praying, leave off their attendance on God's ordinances, and their duty to him, the devil easily makes them his instruments to draw those that will be drawn, into sin, and those that will not, into trouble. Those that leave off to do good, begin to do evil. It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it, to do it with plot and management; with subtlety as well as malice; to devise it upon the bed, where we should be meditating upon God and his word, Mic. 2. 1. This argues the sinner's heart fully set in him to do evil. If we willingly banish holy meditations in our solitary hours, Satan will soon occupy our minds with polluting and mischievous imaginations.

Having entered into the way of sin, that way which has good neither in it, nor at the end of it, they persist, and resolve to persevere in that way, to execute the mischief they have devised. Doing evil themselves, they have no dislike at all of it in others. They that have done evil, if God

give them repentance, abhor the evil they have done, and themselves because of it: it is bitter in the reflection, however sweet it was in the commission; but hardened sinners never reflect upon their sins with regret or remorse, but stand to what they have done, as if they could justify it before God himself.

1. "The depravity of the wicked said, within his heart. There is no fear; God is not before his eyes." The depravity must not be supposed as speaking within the heart of the psalmist. Upon the best authority we may substitute *his* heart for *my* heart.—*Morison*.

Ver. 5—12. Observe the psalmist's meditations upon the grace of God. He here acknowledges the perfections of the Divine Nature. Among men, we have often reason to complain, There is no truth or mercy, Hos. 4. 1, no judgment or justice, Isa. 5. 7. But all these may be found in God, without the least alloy. Whatever is missing, or amiss, in the world, there is nothing missing, nothing amiss in Him that governs it. He is a God of inexhaustible goodness; Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens. If men shut up their compassion, yet, with God, at the throne of his grace, we shall find mercy. On earth we meet with a great deal of disappointment; but in the heavens, where the mercy of God reigns to eternity, there is all satisfaction; if we would be easy, let us have our conversation there, and there let us long to be.

He is a God of inviolable truth; he is faithful to his covenant with his people, which cannot be broken, nor one jot or tittle of the promises of it defeated by all the malice of earth and hell. This is matter of great comfort to all believers. He is a God of uncontested justice and equity; Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, so immovable and so conspicuous. He is a God of unsearchable wisdom and design. We know that he does all wisely and well, but what he does we know not now, it is time enough to know hereafter. The mercy of God, having filled the earth with its effects, filleth the heavens also, by the admission of re-deemed sinners into that blessed state.

The Creator's care sustains and preserves both man and beast: his infinite loving kindness in its varied exercises, encourages the sons of Adam to trust in his mercy, and to confide in his care and protection. The chief of sinners may come to him, receive pardon and peace,

and put their trust under the shadow of his wings, ver. 7. God's loving kindness is precious to the saints. They repose entire confidence in him; they have recourse to him, put themselves under his protection, and then think they are safe, and find themselves easy.

The Lord, without exception of any to whom he sendeth the gospel, offers to be reconciled, through Christ Jesus, to every one who shall fly to the mercy seat erected in Jesus Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh, accordingly as he was held out in the figure of the golden ark of the covenant, and stretched forth wings of the cherubim.—(18.)

It was the character of proselytes, that they came to trust under the wings of the God of Israel, Ruth 2. 12; and what more proper to gather proselytes, than the excellency of his loving kindness? What more powerful to engage our love to him? Those that are thus drawn by love, will cleave to him, for in him they have, or may have, or shall have a complete happiness. Their desires shall be answered, ver. 8, their wants supplied; in God all-sufficient they shall have enough, all that which an enlightened and enlarged soul can desire or receive. The gains of the world, and the delights of sense will surfeit, but never satisfy, Isa. 55. 2: but the communications of Divine favour and grace will satisfy, but never surfeit. A gracious soul, though still desiring more of God, never desires more *than* God. The gifts of Providence so far satisfy them that they are content with such things as they have; ~~I~~ have all, and abound, Phil. 4. 18. The ~~most~~ of holy ordinances is the fatness of sweet to a sanctified soul, and strengthening to the spiritual and Divine life. With this they are abundantly satisfied; they desire nothing more, in this world, than to live a life of communion with God, and to have the comfort of the promises. But the full, the abundant satisfaction, is reserved for the future state, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Their joys shall be constant. There are pleasures that are truly divine. There is a river of these pleasures, always full, always fresh, always flowing. There is enough for all, enough for each. God has not only provided this river of pleasures for his people, but he makes them to drink of it; works in them a gracious appetite to these pleasures, and by his

Spirit fills their souls with joy and peace in believing.

Life and light shall be their everlasting bliss and portion, ver. 9. Having God himself for their happiness, in him they have a fountain of life, from which those rivers of pleasure flow, ver. 8. All the strength and comfort of a sanctified soul, all its gracious principles, powers, and performances, are from God. He is the Spring and Author of all its sensations of Divine things, and all its motions toward them: he quickens whom he will; and whosoever will, may come, and take from him of the waters of life freely. He is the Fountain of eternal life; the happiness of glorified saints consists in the beholding and the enjoyment of him, and in the immediate communications of his love, without interruption or fear of cessation. In him they have light in perfection, wisdom, knowledge, and joy. That Divine light which shines in the scripture, and especially in the face of Christ, the Light of the world, has all truth in it. When we come to see God face to face, within the veil, we shall see light in perfection, we shall know enough then, 1 Cor. 13. 12; 1 John 3. 2.

We have here the psalmist's prayers, intercessions, and holy triumphs, grounded upon these meditations. He intercedes for all saints, ver. 10. The blessing he begs for them, is, God's loving kindness; the happiness of the saints in heaven will be in perfection; the fountain there will be always full, and the streams always flowing. In these is continuance, Isa. 64. 5.

He prays for himself, that he might be preserved in his integrity and comfort, ver. 11. They that have experienced the pleasure of communion with God, cannot but desire that nothing may ever remove them from him. He rejoices in hope of the downfall of all his enemies, in due time, ver. 12. May we know and love, and uprightly serve the Lord; then no proud enemy on earth or from hell shall be able to separate us from his love, but we shall be established in happiness when all the workers of iniquity are cast down to rise no more for ever.

Faith calleth things that are not, as though they were. It carries us forward to the end of time; it shows us the Lord, sitting on his throne of judgment; the righteous caught up to meet him in the air; the world in flames under his feet, the empire of sin fallen to rise no more!—(32.)

PSALM XXXVII.

This psalm is an exposition of some things hard to be understood: the advancement of the wicked, and the trials of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties that arise thereupon, with exhortations how to conduct ourselves under such dark dispensations. I. The psalmist forbids us to fret at the prosperity of the wicked, in their wicked ways, ver. 1, 7, 8. II. He gives very good reasons why we should not—Because of the scandalous character of the wicked, ver. 12, 14, 21, 32, and the honourable character of the righteous, ver. 21, 26, 30, 31. Because of the destruction and ruin which the wicked are nigh to, ver. 2, 9, 10, 20, 35, 36, 38, and the salvation and protection which the righteous are sure of, ver. 13, 15, 17, 28, 33, 39, 40. Because of the mercies God has in store for all good people, ver. 11, 16, 18, 19, 22—25, 28, 29, 37. III. Remedies against envying the prosperity of the wicked, ver. 3—6, 27, 34. From this psalm let us learn rightly to understand the providence of God, and accommodate ourselves to it; at all times carefully doing our duty, and then patiently leaving the event with God, believing that howsoever things may look for the present, it shall be well with them that fear God.

Ver. 1—6. We are here cautioned against discontent at the prosperity and success of evil-doers, ver. 1, 2. When we look abroad, we see the world full of evil-doers, that flourish and live in ease, and have power to do mischief. So it was of old, and therefore let us not marvel at the matter, as though it were some new or strange thing. When we look within, we are tempted to fret at this. We are tempted to think them the only happy people, and so incline to imitate, and join them: this we are warned against. Fretfulness and envy are sins that are their own punishments. Yet when we look forward with an eye of faith, we shall see no reason to envy the wicked. Outward prosperity is fading. They will soon be cut down by the judgments of God. Their triumphing is short, but their weeping, and wailing will be everlasting.

We are here counselled to live in confidence and complacency in God, and that will keep us from fretting at the prosperity of evil-doers. Here are three excellent precepts, to be ruled by, and three precious promises that we may rely upon.

1. We must make God our Hope in the way of duty, and then we shall have a comfortable subsistence in this world, ver. 3. The life of religion lies in a believing reliance on God, and a diligent care to serve him according to his will. It is not trusting God, but tempting him, if we do not make conscience of duty to him; nor must we think to do good, and then to trust to ourselves, and our own righteousness and strength; no, we must both trust in the Lord, and do good. And then it is promised that we shall be provided for in this world. A man's life consists not in abundance, but—Thou shalt have food convenient for thee. This is more than we deserve, and it is enough for one that is going to heaven. The land of Canaan was considered as the sum of earthly happiness, and the type of heavenly enjoyment: to dwell and be provided for in the Lord's land, under his protection, near his ordinances, and among his people, was all the true Israelite could desire, and this the Lord promises him.

2. We must make God our heart's delight, and then we shall have our heart's desire, ver. 4. We were commanded, ver. 3, to do good, and then follows this command, to delight in God, which is as much a privilege as a duty. This pleasant duty of delighting in God has a promise annexed to it, which is very full and precious, enough to recompense the hardest services. God has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body, and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul. What is the desire of the heart of a good man? It is this—to know, and love, and live to God.

3. We must make God our Guide, submit to his guidance and disposal, and then all our affairs, even the most intricate and perplexed, shall be made to issue well, ver. 5, 6. The duty is very simple; and if we do it aright, it will make us easy; Commit thy way unto the Lord; roll thy way upon the Lord, so the margin reads it, Prov. 16. 3; Ps. 55. 22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, the burden of thy care, 1 Pet. 5. 7. We must roll it off ourselves, so as not to afflict and perplex ourselves with thoughts about future events, Matt. 6. 25, not to cumber and trouble ourselves either with the contrivance of the means, or with expectation of the end, but refer it to God. Reveal thy way unto the Lord, (so the Greek;) by

prayer spread thy case, and all thy cares before the Lord, and then trust in him to bring it to a good issue, with a full satisfaction that all is well which God does. We must do our duty, that must be our care, and then leave the event with God. The promise is very sweet; He shall bring that to pass, whatever it is, which thou hast committed to him. The righteousness and judgment of good people may be clouded and eclipsed, but it is promised that God will, in due time, roll away the reproach they are under, and bring forth their righteousness, to their honour; perhaps in this world; at furthest, in the great day, Matt. 13. 43.

Ver. 7—20. In these verses we have the foregoing precepts inculcated. Let us compose ourselves by believing in God, ver. 7; be well reconciled to all he does, because it is what God has appointed; and be well satisfied that he will still make all to work for good to us, though we know not how or which way. Let us not discompose ourselves at what we see in this world, ver. 8; not harbour any hard thoughts of God and his providence. A fretful, discontented spirit lies open to many temptations.

The victory over the temptation to envy the wicked is not gotten easily, nor by human reasoning, but by faith in God, and patient waiting on him. We have need to be pressed again and again to resist this temptation.—(18.)

The prosperity of the wicked will soon be at an end, ver. 9. Their ruin is sure, and it is very near, ver. 10. To the same purport, ver. 20. The wicked are the enemies of the Lord; when their ruin comes, they shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God, and be consumed as the fat of the sacrifices was upon the altar. The condition of the righteous, even in this life, is every way more desirable than that of the wicked, ver. 16.

The little which is allotted to the righteous comes from special covenanted love, in answer to their prayers and in the use of lawful means; it is received with thankfulness, and used with temperance and charity; and, being attended with a blessing, it subverts the salvation of their souls. In all these and many other respects, it is more comfortable and more profitable than the ill-gotten or abused riches of ungodly men. It comes from a hand of special love, and not merely from

a general providence; it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ, who is the heir of all things; and it is put to a better use, it is sanctified to them by the blessing of God, Tit. 1. 15.

The promises here made to the righteous secure them such a happiness that they need not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. Let them know to their comfort, that they shall inherit as much of the earth as infinite Wisdom sees good for them; they have the promises of the life that now is, 1 Tim. 4. 8. If all the earth were necessary to make them happy, they should have it. All is theirs, even the world, and things present, as well as things to come, 1 Cor. 3. 21, 22. This promise is here made to those that live a life of faith, ver. 9. God provides plentifully and well, not only for his working servants, but for his waiting servants. The meek shall inherit the earth, ver. 11. Our Saviour has made this a gospel-promise, Matt. 5. 5.

Perhaps they have not abundance of wealth to delight in, but they have that which is better—abundance of peace, inward peace and tranquillity of mind, peace with God, and then peace in God, that abundance of peace which is in the kingdom of Christ, 72. 7; that peace which the world cannot give, John 14. 27, and which the wicked cannot have, Isa. 57. 21. This they shall delight themselves in, while those who have abundance of wealth, do but cumber and perplex themselves with it, and have little delight in it.

God knows the believers' days, v. 18. Not one day's work shall go unrewarded. He knows their fair days, and has pleasure in their prosperity; he knows their cloudy and dark days, the days of their affliction, and, as their day is, so shall their strength be. Their inheritance shall be for ever. Their time on earth is reckoned by days, which will soon be numbered; but it was never intended that their inheritance should be confined within the limits of those days; no, that must be the portion of an immortal soul. They that are sure of an everlasting inheritance, have no reason to envy the transitory possessions and pleasures of this world.

In the worst of times, it shall go well with them, ver. 19; They shall not be ashamed of their hope and confidence in God, nor of the profession they have made of religion; that will be a real support to them, in evil times.

Good people have no reason to fret at the occasional success of the designs of the wicked against the just, ver. 12, 13. God is not only displeased with them, but his day is coming, that is, a day of recompenses, a day which will set all to rights. It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. 4. 3; God's day will give a decisive judgment. The day of their ruin is not yet come, but certainly will come. Their attempts will be their destruction, ver. 14, 15. They prepare instruments of death. Uprightness itself will be no fence against their malice. But their malice justly recoils upon themselves. Sometimes that very thing proves to be their own destruction, which they projected against their neighbours. Those that are not suddenly cut off, shall be disabled from doing any further mischief, ver. 15. The Lord upholds the righteous, so that they neither sink under the weight of their afflictions, nor are crushed by the violence of their enemies. They that are so upheld by the Rock of ages, have no reason to envy the wicked the support of their broken reeds.

Ver. 21—33. The first thing which the Lord our God requires of us is, that we do justly, and render to all their due, ver. 21. Whatever some men seem to think, as it is a great sin for those that are able, to deny the payment of their just debts, so it is a great misery not to be able to pay them. We must be ready to all acts of charity and beneficence, ver. 21. Giving and lending are acceptable to God, when they come from a merciful disposition in the heart, which will keep us from being weary of well-doing. He that is truly merciful, will be ever merciful, v. 26. We must leave our sins; learn to do well, and cleave to it, ver. 27. This is true religion. We must abound in good discourse, glorify God, and edify others, ver. 30. Out of the abundance of a good heart will the mouth speak to edify. We must have our will entirely subjected to the will and word of God, ver. 31. The law of God must be a commanding, ruling principle in the heart, and then the conversation will be regular and uniform.

The blessing of God is the spring, sweetness, and security of all temporal enjoyments, ver. 22. Our creature comforts are comforts indeed to us, when we see them flowing from the blessing of God, from his favour, his promise, and his covenant

with us; and if we are sure of the blessing of God, we are sure not to want any thing that is good for us in this world. God will direct and dispose of our actions and affairs, as may be most for his glory, ver. 23. By his grace and Holy Spirit he directs the thoughts, affections, and designs of good men. By his providence he overrules events that concern them, so as to make their way plain. Observe, God orders the steps of a good man; not only his way in general, by his written word, but his particular steps, by the whispers of conscience, saying, This is the way, walk in it. He does not always show him his way for a distance, but leads him step by step, as children are led, and keeps him in a continual dependence upon his guidance. God will keep us from being ruined by our falls, either into sin or into trouble, ver. 24. A good man may be overtaken in a fault, but the grace of God will recover him to repentance, so that he shall not be utterly cast down. A good man may be in distress, his affairs embarrassed, his spirits sunk, but he shall not be utterly cast down; God will be the strength of his heart, when his flesh and heart fail, and will uphold him, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

Few observers of mankind have known the consistent believer or his children reduced to abject, friendless penury. Times of persecution seem excepted from general rules concerning temporal things, having many particular promises relating to them. He shall not want the necessary supports of this life, ver. 25. There are very few instances of good men, or their families, that are reduced to such extreme poverty as many bring themselves to by their wickedness. If they want, God will raise them up friends to supply them, without becoming common beggars; or if they go from door to door for meat, it shall not be with despair, as the wicked man that wanders abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? Job 15. 23. God will not desert us, but graciously protect us in our difficulties and straits, ver. 28; he forsakes not his saints in affliction, but takes care that they be preserved for ever. We shall have a comfortable settlement in this world, and in a better when we leave this. They shall not be tossed, that make God their rest. But on this earth there is no dwelling for ever, no continuing city; in heaven only, the righteous shall

dwell for ever; that will be their everlasting habitation. It is promised that neither Satan nor his instruments shall prevail, ver. 32, 33. A good man may fall into the hands of a messenger of Satan, and be sorely buffeted, but God will not leave him in his hands, 1 Cor. 10. 13.

25. *Dr. A. Clarke* states his belief that this verse is fulfilled in the literal sense in all cases. He says, "I am now grey-headed myself, I have travelled in different countries, and have had many opportunities of seeing and conversing with religious people in all situations of life; and I have not, to my knowledge, seen one instance to the contrary. I have seen no righteous man forsaken, nor any children of the righteous begging their bread."

Ver. 34—40. The duty here pressed upon us, is still the same, ver. 34, Wait on the Lord, and keep his way; duty is ours, and we must mind it, keep God's way, and never turn out of it, nor loiter in it; but events are God's, we must refer to him for the disposal of them.

The reasons to enforce this duty are taken from the certain destruction of the wicked, and the certain salvation of the righteous. This good man, being tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, goes into the sanctuary of God, and by comparing that with the end of the righteous, baffles and silences the temptation.

What a striking picture is ver. 35, 36, of many a prosperous enemy of God! For a season he has been left to proud distinction, his mind has been inflated with pride, he has become the terror and scourge of the church, his branches have extended on every side, but a sad change has been experienced. Nothing has remained to tell posterity of former greatness, but the recollection of miseries inflicted, and of crimes committed. God does in a remarkable manner blight the projects of the prosperous wicked, especially such as persecute his servants.—(47.)

None are perfect in themselves, not the most holy men upon earth, but they are so in Christ Jesus, who has obtained complete redemption, perfectly fulfilled the law for them, fully expiated their sins, procured the entire pardon of them, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, by which they are perfectly justified. And behold the man who has a right spirit renewed in him, and the righteousness of Christ upon him, such are to be marked and imitated, ver. 37. Especially the end of such persons is to be marked.—(37.)

The blessedness of the righteous is,

1. Preferment, ver. 34. God will advance them to a place in the heavenly mansions, to inherit that good land, that land of promise, of which Canaan was a type.

2. Peace, ver. 37. If all his days continue dark and cloudy, his dying day may prove comfortable to him, and his sun may set bright; or, if it should set under a cloud, yet his future state will be peace, everlasting peace, Isa. 57. 2. A peaceful death has concluded the troublesome life of many a good man; and all is well, that thus ends everlastingly well. Balaam himself wished that his death and his last end might be like that of the righteous, Num. 23. 10.

3. Salvation, ver. 39, 40. The salvation of the righteous will be the Lord's doing. He that intends Christ and heaven for them, will be a God all-sufficient to them. He shall help them, and deliver them. He will help them to do their duties, to bear their burdens, and to maintain their spiritual conflicts; help them to bear their troubles well, and get good by them, and, in due time, shall deliver them out of their troubles. He shall deliver them from the wicked that would overwhelm and swallow them up; shall secure them where the wicked cease from troubling. He shall save them; not only keep them safe, but make them happy, because they trust in him; not because they have merited it from him, but because they have committed themselves to him, and reposed a confidence in him, and have thereby honoured him.

Let sinners then be counselled to depart from evil, and to do good; to repent of and forsake sin, and to trust in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. Let them take his yoke upon them, and learn of him that they may dwell for evermore in heaven; let not those who are inquiring after salvation fear the cross or self-denial; the Lord will compensate them for all they part with, or suffer. Let us commit all that we have, and all that we attempt, to the Lord's disposal, and he will do that which is best for us. Let us mark the closing scenes of different characters, and keep our eye fixed on eternal things, and our dependence on God's mercy. Thus we may pass safely and with comfort through this dangerous and miserable world; meet death with composure, and have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

35. The word translated bay-tree, means, a tree that has not been transplanted, but is growing in its native soil, in all its natural luxuriance. Bishop *Horne* refers to Dan. 4. 10, &c., as a striking instance of the use of this image. X

PSALM XXXVIII.

David's sins and his afflictions are the cause of his grief, and the matter of his complaints. He complains (1.) Of God's displeasure, and of his own sin, which provoked God against him, ver. 1—5. Of his bodily sickness, ver. 6—10. Of the unkindness of his friends, ver. 11. (2.) Of injuries which his enemies did him, pleading his good conduct toward them, yet confessing his sins against God, ver. 12—20. Lastly, he concludes the psalm with earnest prayers to God, for his gracious presence and help, ver. 21, 22.

It was composed under sore affliction, and when in great distress of mind by reason of sin, and was written as a memorial of his sense of sin, his great afflictions and deliverance from them.—(27.)

Ver. 1.—11. David deprecates the wrath of God and his displeasure in his affliction, ver. 1. Those who would escape the wrath of God, must pray against that, and be content to bear any outward affliction, while it comes from, and consists with the love of God. Under the temporal effects of God's abhorrence of sin, and the anguish of his correcting rod, the believer is most troubled with the apprehension of his wrath.

He bitterly laments the impressions of God's displeasure upon his soul, ver. 2. He complains of God's wrath, as that which inflicted the bodily distemper he was under, ver. 3. The bitterness of it infused in his mind, affected his body; but that was not the worst, it caused disquietude of heart. Nothing will disquiet the heart of a good man so much as the sense of God's anger. The way to keep the heart quiet, is, to keep ourselves in the love of God. Their own iniquities form the deluge which goes over their heads, and their sense of guilt is the heaviest burden that is laid upon them. It is too heavy for them to bear; and would sink them into despair and ruin, unless removed by the pardoning mercy of God.

He acknowledges his sin to be the procuring cause of all his troubles, ver. 3. If our trouble be the fruit of God's anger, sin is the cause of it. Are we restless? It is

sin that makes us so. If there were not sin in our souls, there would be no pain in our bones, no illness in our bodies. It is sin therefore which this good man complains most of as a burden, ver. 4. Note; Sin is a burden. The power of sin dwelling in us, is a weight, Heb. 12. 1; all are clogged with it; all the saints complain of it as a body of death they are loaded with, Rom. 7. 24. The guilt of sin is a burden to the whole creation, which groans under it, Rom. 8. 21, 22. It will, first or last, be a burden to the sinners themselves; either a burden of repentance, when they labour and are heavy-laden under it, or a burden of ruin, when it sinks them to the lowest hell. Sins are wounds, ver. 5; Gen. 4. 23; painful, mortal wounds. A slight sore, neglected, may prove of fatal consequence, and so may a slight sin, slighted and left unrepented of. When we perceive our true condition, the Good Physician will be valued, resorted to, and obeyed. Yet even they who are in the way of an effectual cure, often retard its progress through their foolishness, and their wounds rankle because they delay to go to their merciful Friend.

He gives ease to his grief, by pouring out his complaint before the Lord. His conscience was pained, he had no rest in his spirit; and a wounded spirit who can bear? ver. 6. His spirit was feeble and sore broken, and his heart disquieted, ver. 8. Herein David, in his sufferings, was a type of Christ, who, being in his agony, cried out, My soul is exceeding sorrowful. This is a sorer affliction than any other in this world. Whatever God is pleased to lay upon us, we have no reason to complain, so long as he preserves to us the use of our reason, and peace of conscience. He was sick and weak in body. See what vile bodies these are which we carry about with us; and what an offence and grievance they may soon be made to the soul, as they always are a clog. The bodies both of the greatest and of the best of men, have in them the same seeds of diseases, that the bodies of others have, and are liable to the same disasters. When, at any time, we are distempered in our bodies, we ought to remember how God has been dishonoured in and by our bodies. David was feeble and sore-broken, ver. 8. Sickness will tame the strongest body, and the stoutest spirit. His friends were unkind to him, ver. 11. Even his kinsmen, that were bound to him by

blood and alliance, stood afar off. Adversity tries friendship. It is our wisdom to make sure a Friend in heaven, from whose love no tribulation or distress shall be able to separate us. David, in his troubles, was a type of Christ in his agony, of Christ on his cross, feeble and sore broken, and then deserted by his friends and kinsmen, who beheld afar off.

But in the midst of his complaints he comforts himself with the knowledge God graciously took of his griefs and of his prayers, ver. 9. The groanings which cannot be uttered, are not hid from Him that searches the heart, and knows what is the mind of the Spirit, Rom. 8. 26, 27. Whatever burden lies upon our spirits, we should by faith cast it upon God.

Ver. 12—22. In these verses David complains of the power and malice of his enemies, who, from his weakness, and the trouble of his mind, took advantage to do him a mischief. Such a rooted enmity there is in the hearts of wicked men to goodness for its own sake, that they hate it, even when they themselves have the benefit of it. They hate prayer, even in those that pray for them; and hate peace, even in those that would be at peace with them. It should seem that David, in the complaints he makes of his enemies, has a reference to Christ, whose persecutors were such as are here described.

Our enemies do us real mischief only when they provoke us to sin, Neh. 6. 13, when they prevail to drive us from God and our duty. If by Divine grace we are enabled to prevent this mischief, if we still hold fast our integrity and our peace, who can hurt us? Yet even in this case the Lord may see good to leave us for a time under the feeling of his displeasure, which must needs cause the man who loves God to go mourning all the day long. The hypocrite is a stranger to anguish of spirit under the consciousness of guilt. But in the true believer's case this trouble will be useful, he will wait for his God, and will not seek relief from the world or himself.

The less notice we take of the unkindness and injuries that are done us, the more we consult the quiet of our own minds, ver. 13. Note; When our enemies are most clamorous, it is, generally, our prudence to be silent. Herein David was a type of Christ, who was as a sheep dumb before the shearer, and when he

was reviled, reviled not again; and both are examples to us, not to render railing for railing; but David's troubles were the chastisement, and partly the consequence of his transgressions, while Christ suffered for our sins, and ours only. What right can a sinner have to yield to impatience or anger, when mercifully corrected for his sins?

He kept close to his God by faith and prayer, and so both supported himself under these injuries, and silenced his own resentments of them. It is a good reason why we should bear reproach and calumny with silence and patience, because God is witness, therefore let us be silent, for this is an evidence that we trust in him. Our Lord Jesus, when he suffered, committed himself to Him that judges righteously; 1 Pet. 2. 23; and we shall lose nothing, at last, by doing so. He called upon God, ver. 16. We have a God to go to, who will be faithful to us; we may yet hope in the mercy and faithfulness of the Lord, and pray to him with the prospect of being heard and helped.

He bewails his own follies and infirmities. He was very sensible of the present workings of corruption in him, ver. 17. Good men, by setting their sorrow continually before them, have been ready to halt, who, by setting God always before them, have kept their standing. He remembered his former transgressions, acknowledging that by them he had brought these troubles upon himself, and had forfeited the Divine protection. Though before men he could justify himself, before God he will judge and condemn himself, ver. 18. If we are truly penitent for sin, that will make us patient under affliction, and particularly under unjust censures. Two things are required in repentance, 1. Confession of sin. We must declare our sins before God freely and fully, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves. 2. Contrition for sin; every true penitent grieves for the dishonour he has done to God, and the wrong he has done to himself. I will be in care or fear about my sin, so some: in fear lest it ruin me, and in care to get it pardoned.

What David says, ver. 19, 20, is applicable to his distress, and the prosperity of his adversaries; to the sufferings of Christ, and the triumph of the Jews; to the afflictions of the church, and the empty joys of the world; to the weakness of faith, and the strength of nature. The

result of all is, that salvation cometh of God only, and is to be sought of him.—(32.)

He concludes with very earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence, and seasonable powerful succour, ver. 21, 22. Be not far from me, as my unbelieving heart is ready to fear thou art. Nothing goes nearer to the heart of a good man in affliction, than to be under the apprehension of God's deserting him in wrath; nor does any thing therefore come more feelingly from his heart than this prayer. God gives us leave, not only to call upon him when in trouble, but to hasten him. He pleads, Thou art my God, whom I serve, and on whom I depend to bear me out; and my salvation, who alone art able to save me, who hast engaged thyself by promise to save me, and from whom alone I expect salvation. Let us continue in prayer that the Lord will pardon and subdue our iniquities; that he will never forsake us, or be far from us, for he will surely hasten to their help who trust in him as their salvation.

PSALM XXXIX.

David (1.) relates the struggle in his breast, between grace and corruption, between passion and patience, ver. 1—3. He meditates upon the doctrine of man's frailty and mortality, and prays to God to instruct him in it, ver. 4—6. (2.) He applies to God for the pardon of his sins, the removal of his afflictions, and the lengthening of his life, ver. 7—13. We should seek to have our hearts affected with the brevity, uncertainty, and calamitous state of human life, and to get reconciled to the holy will of God in it.

Ver. 1—6. David here leaves upon record the workings of his heart under his afflictions; and it is good for us to do so. He remembers that he had resolved to be very circumspect, ver. 1. We ought stedfastly to resolve that we will take heed to our ways. We must, upon all occasions, remind ourselves of that resolution; it is a covenant we must be always mindful of. If an evil thought should arise in his mind, he would lay his hand upon his mouth, and suppress it; this is so great an attainment, that if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and so needful, that he who seems to be religious, but bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain. David had resolved that he would keep a

bridle upon his mouth; as upon an unruly horse, to guide and direct it, to check and curb it; see Jam. 3. 3. Watchfulness in the habit, is the bridle upon the head; watchfulness in the act and exercise, is the hand upon the bridle. He would double his guard when there was most danger of scandal. When he was in company with the wicked, he would take heed of saying any thing that might give occasion to them to blaspheme. When not able to separate from wicked men, we should remember they will watch every word, and turn it, if they can, to our disadvantage, and the discredit of our profession. Or when contemplating the pride and prosperity of evil doers, he was tempted to speak amiss; then he would take special care what he said. Note; The stronger the temptation to a sin is, the stronger the resolution must be against it. Sometimes it may be necessary to keep silence even from good words, ver. 2; but in general we are wrong when backward to engage in edifying discourse.

The psalmist was aware of the baseness of his enemies, yet their treatment, and his zeal for the honour of God, occasioned a painful commotion in his mind. With some impatience, he prayed to the Lord that he might know how long he was to suffer such evils. Impatience is a sin that has its ill cause within ourselves, and that is, musing; and its ill effects upon ourselves, and that is no less than burning. If we would prevent the mischief of ungoverned passions, we must redress the grievance of ungoverned thoughts.

He prays to God, to make him sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death. Death ends our probation and preparation, and is an awful entrance upon a state of recompense and retribution. To the wicked man, it is the end of all his joys; to a godly man, it is the end of all his griefs. Lord, give me to consider the measure of my days; that they are measured in the counsel of God. When we look upon death as a thing at a distance, we are tempted to adjourn the necessary preparations for it; but when we consider how short life is, we shall see ourselves concerned to do what our hand finds to do, not only with all our might, but with all possible expedition.

In our greatest health and prosperity, every man is altogether vanity—he cannot live long; he may die soon. This is an undoubted truth, but which we are very

unwilling to believe, and need to have solemnly attested to us, as it is, by frequent instances. Selah is annexed. Stop here, and pause awhile, that you may take time to consider and apply this truth, that every man is vanity. He is altogether vanity. We ourselves are so.

Howsoever, in a general way, we think something of our ends, yet unless the Spirit of God teach us our duty, we never shall be able soundly to satisfy or convince ourselves of the presence and speediness of death. Therefore let us pray that God would enlighten our minds with Divine knowledge, and fill our hearts with his grace, that we may rightly consider of death, and esteem every day and hour as if it were the day and hour of death.—(7.)

The psalmist mentions three things, and shows the vanity of each of them, ver. 6. 1. The vanity of our joys and honours. It is but a show, and a vain show, like the rainbow, the gaudy colours of which vanish and disappear quickly—such is life, Jam. 4. 14, therefore such are all the gaieties of it. 2. The vanity of our griefs and fears. Our disquietudes are often groundless; we vex ourselves without any just cause, the occasions of our trouble are often of our own fancy and imagination. And always fruitless; we disquiet ourselves in vain, we cannot alter the nature of things, nor the counsel of God. 3. The vanity of our cares and toils. For when man has filled his treasures with his trash, he knows not who shall gather them, nor to whom they shall descend when he is gone; Eccl. 4. 8; 2. 19. This is vanity.

Ver. 7—13. The psalmist, having meditated on the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend all the comforts and pleasures of life, turns his eyes and heart heavenward. There is no solid satisfaction to be had in the creature; but it is to be found in God, and in communion with him; to him we should be driven by our disappointments. David here expresses,

1. His dependence on God, ver. 7: he despairs of finding happiness in the things of the world, and disclaims all expectations from it. The consideration of the vanity and frailty of human life, should deaden our desires to the things of this world, and lower our expectations from it. If the world be such a thing as this, God deliver me from having, or seeking my portion in it. He takes hold of happiness

and satisfaction in God. When creature-confidences fail, it is our comfort that we have a God to go to, a God to trust unto; and we should thereby be quickened to take the faster hold of Him by faith.

2. His submission to God, and his cheerful acquiescence in his holy will, ver. 9. If our hope be in God for a happiness in the other world, we may well reconcile ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence concerning us in this world. We may here see a good God doing all, and ordering all events concerning us; and a good man, for that reason, saying nothing against it. All that God does, is well done.

3. His desire toward God. Is any afflicted? let him pray, Jam. 5. 13. For the pardoning of his sin, and the preventing of his shame, ver. 8. Before he prays, ver. 10, Remove thy stroke from me; he prays, ver. 8, Deliver me from all mine offences, from the guilt I have contracted, the punishment I have deserved, and the power of corruption I have been led captive by. We should both watch and pray against sin. The credit of our profession is concerned in the preservation of our integrity.

Also for the removal of his afflictions, ver. 10. When we are under the correcting hand of God, we must look to God himself, and not to any other, for relief. He only, who inflicts the stroke, can remove it; we may pray in faith, and with satisfaction, that our afflictions may be removed, when our sins are pardoned; Isa. 38. 17; when, as here, the affliction is sanctified, and has done its work, and we are humbled under the hand of God.

He pleads the great extremity he was reduced to by his affliction, which made him an object of God's compassion. The strongest, and boldest, and best of men, cannot bear up under, much less make head against God's wrath. It was not his case only, but any man will find himself an unequal match for the Almighty, ver. 11. When God, at any time, with rebukes corrects us, we must acknowledge that he is righteous in it. Whenever he corrects man, it is for iniquity. Our ways and our doings procure the trouble to ourselves, and we are beaten with a rod of our own making. We cannot oppose the effects of his controversy. God's rebukes make man's beauty to consume away like a moth, as we often see. What a poor thing is beauty! and what fools are they

that are proud of it, or in love with it, when it will certainly, and may quickly be consumed thus! Some make the moth to represent man, who is as easily crushed as a moth with the touch of a finger, Job 4. 19. Others make it to represent the Divine rebukes, which silently and insensibly waste and consume us, as the moth does the garment.

The body of man is as a garment to the soul. In this garment sin has lodged a moth, which by degrees wears away, first the beauty, then the strength, and finally the substance of its parts. Whoever has watched the progress of a consumption, or any other lingering distemper, nay, the slow and silent devastations of time alone in the human frame, will discern at once the force of this comparison. and the propriety of the reflection that follows, Surely every man is vanity.—(32.)

David hoped that the end was accomplished for which the rebuke was sent, and therefore it would be removed in mercy; and unless an affliction has done its work, though it may be removed, it is not removed in mercy. He that does not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, much less his own children, will not hold his peace at their tears, ver. 12, but will speak deliverance for them, or, in the mean time, speak comfort to them. Afflictions are sent to stir up prayer. If they have that effect, we may hope that God will hear our prayer; for the prayer which, by his providence, he gives occasion for, and which by his Spirit of grace, he indites, shall not return void. It helped to take his affections off from the world; now, more than ever, he looked upon himself as a stranger and sojourner here, like all his fathers, not at home in this world, but travelling through it to another, to a better, and would never reckon himself at home till in heaven.

He expects weariness and ill treatment by the way; but he shall not stay here long; walking with God by faith, he goes forward on his journey, not diverted from his course, or cast down by the difficulties he meets. He only desires to be spared till his service on earth is finished, and his title to heaven clear, ver. 13; and that he may depart in that manifest exercise of faith and grace, which may be honourable to God, encouraging to his brethren, and comfortable to himself. Then, going hence, being no more on earth, he enters upon perfect and eternal rest in heaven.

Oh! how blessed it is to sit loose and detached from things here below, that we may have our conversation in heaven, that, while going home to our Father's house, we may use the world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of it passeth away; like the patriarchs may we always look for that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.—(37.)

PSALM XL.

In this psalm (1.) David records God's favour in delivering him out of deep distress, ver. 1—5. (2.) Thence he takes occasion to speak of the work of our redemption by Christ, ver. 6—10. (3.) That gives him encouragement to pray to God for mercy and grace, both for himself and for his friends, ver. 11—17. In this psalm David seems to have intended to speak of his own case and experience; but the Holy Ghost led him to use several expressions which are only applicable to Christ.

Ver. 1—5. In these verses, we have the great distress and trouble that the psalmist had been in. Despondency of spirit, under the sense of God's withdrawals, and prevailing doubts and fears about the eternal state, are a horrible pit and miry clay, and have been so to many a dear child of God.

He says, Waiting, I waited. From God he expected relief, not doubting but it would come in due time. There is power enough in God to help the weakest, and grace enough in God to help the unworthiest of all his people, that trust in him. But he waited patiently; the relief did not come quickly, yet he doubted not but it would come, and he resolved to continue believing, and hoping, and praying, till it did come. Those whose expectation is from God, may wait with assurance, but must wait with patience. Now this is very applicable to Christ. His agony, both in the garden, and on the cross, was a horrible pit and miry clay. Then was his soul troubled and exceeding sorrowful; but then he prayed, Father, glorify thy name; Father, save me; then he kept hold of his relation to his Father; "My God, my God," and thus waited patiently for him.

The psalmist records his comfortable experience of God's goodness to him in his distress, for the honour of God, his

own and others' encouragement. God answered his prayers. Those that wait patiently for God do not wait in vain. Our Lord Jesus was heard, in that he feared, Heb. 5. 7. Nay, he was sure that the Father heard him always. God silenced his fears, and gave him a settled peace of conscience, ver. 2. Those that have been under the prevalency of a religious melancholy, and by the grace of God have been relieved, may apply this very feelingly to themselves; they are brought up out of a horrible pit. The mercy is completed by the setting of their feet upon a rock, where they find firm footing, are as much elevated with the hopes of heaven, as they were before cast down with the fears of hell. Christ is the Rock on which a poor soul may stand fast, and on whose mediation between us and God, alone, we can build any solid hopes or satisfaction. The mercy is continued in the establishment of their goings. Where God has given a steadfast hope, he expects there should be steady, regular walk and conduct; and if that be the blessed fruit of it, we have reason to acknowledge with thankfulness, the riches and power of his grace.

God filled him with joy, as well as peace in believing. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus. No such redemption could before be celebrated; and multitudes, by faith beholding his sufferings and his glory, have learned to fear the justice, and trust in the mercy of God through Him.

Good improvement should be made of this instance of God's goodness to David. There is a holy, reverent fear of God, which is not only consistent with, but the foundation of our hope in him, ver. 3. God's dealings with our Lord Jesus, are our great encouragement; when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, he caused it to appear that he accepted the payment he made, and was satisfied: and what greater encouragement can we have to fear and worship God, and to trust in him? See Rom. 4. 25; 5. 1, 2.

The psalmist invites others to make God their Hope, as he did, by pronouncing those happy that do so, ver. 4. This is applicable, particularly, to our faith in Christ. Blessed are they that trust in him, and in his righteousness alone.

The joyful sense he had of this mercy, led him to observe, with thankfulness, the many other favours he had received

from God, ver. 5. Many are the benefits with which we are daily loaded, both by the providence, and by the grace of God. All his wonderful works are the result of his thoughts, his many thoughts, to upward. They are innumerable; they cannot be reckoned up in order.

Ver. 6—10. The psalmist, being amazed at the wonderful works that God had done for his people, is carried out here to foretell that work of wonder which excels all the rest, and is the foundation and fountain of all—our redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. This paragraph is quoted by the apostle, Heb. 10. 5, &c., and applied to Christ, and his undertaking for us. As in the institutions, so in the devotions of the old testament, there is more of Christ, than, perhaps, the old testament saints were aware of. Observe the utter insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to atone for sin. Thou wouldst not have the Redeemer offer them; something he must have to offer, but not these, Heb. 8. 3; therefore he must not be of the house of Aaron, Heb. 7. 14. Or, In the days of the Messiah, burnt-offering and sin-offering will be no longer required, but all those ceremonial institutions will be abolished. But that is not all; even while the law concerning them was in full force, it might be said, God did not desire them, nor accept them, for their own sake; they could not take away the guilt of sin by satisfying God's justice. They could not take away the terror of sin, by pacifying the conscience, nor the power of sin, by sanctifying the nature; it was impossible, Heb. 9. 9; 10. 1—4. What there was in them that was valuable, resulted from their reference to Jesus Christ, of whom they were types; shadows indeed, but shadows of good things to come, and trials of the faith and obedience of God's people, of their obedience to the law, and their faith in the gospel. But the Substance must come, which is Christ, who must bring that glory to God, and that grace to man, which it was impossible those sacrifices should ever do.

Observe the designation of our Lord Jesus to the work and office of Mediator; Mine ears hast thou opened, Mine ears hast thou digged. It is supposed by some to allude to the law and custom of binding servants: see Exod. 21. 6. His ears were opened to receive and obey the command of the Father; or bored, as those of

servants who chose to continue with their masters, Exod. 21. 6. He freely offered himself to this service. He firmly obliged himself to it; I come; I promise to come in the fulness of time. He frankly owned himself engaged; He said, Lo, I come—said it all along to the old testament saints, who therefore knew him by the title of, He that should come. This word was the foundation on which they built their faith and hope, which they looked and longed for the accomplishment of.

In his obedience unto death the eternal purposes of God were accomplished, the types and prophecies of the old dispensation were fulfilled, the law of God was magnified, and the demands of his justice were satisfied. Humiliating and painful as this was, Jesus delighted to perform it; the law of God possessed his heart, and he was bent upon honouring it, that all might learn the evil of transgression. In the volume or roll of the book it was written of him. In the close rolls of the Divine decrees and counsel, the covenant of redemption was recorded, the counsel of peace between the Father and the Son. Also Moses and all the prophets testified of him; in all the volumes of the old testament, something or other was written of him, John 19. 28. Now the purchase of our salvation is made; the proclamation is sent forth, calling upon us to come and accept of it.

Observe the publication of the gospel to the children of men, even in the great congregation, ver. 9, 10. The same that as a Priest wrought out redemption for us, as a Prophet, by his own preaching first, then by his apostles, and still by his word and Spirit, makes it known to us, Heb. 2. 3. It is the gospel of Christ, that is preached to all nations. Observe what is preached; it is righteousness, ver. 9, God's righteousness, ver. 10, the everlasting righteousness which Christ has brought in, Dan. 9. 24; compare Rom. 1. 16, 17. It is God's faithfulness to his promise, and the salvation which had long been looked for. It is God's loving kindness and his truth, his mercy according to his word. Note; In the work of our redemption, we ought to take notice how bright all the Divine attributes shine, and give to God the praise of each of them. It is preached to the great congregation, ver. 9, 10. The gospel was preached both to Jews and Gentiles, to great congregations of both. Solemn religious assemblies are

a Divine institution, and in them the glory of God, in the face of Christ, ought to be both praised, to the glory of God, and preached for the edification of men. It is preached, freely and openly, ver. 10. Whoever undertook to preach the gospel of Christ, would be in great temptation to hide it and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention, and in the face of great opposition; but Christ himself, and those whom he calls to that work, were and are wonderfully carried on in it. May we believe his testimony, trust his promise, and submit unto his authority.

6. This passage is quoted Heb. 10. 5, but there it is, "A body hast thou prepared me," instead of, "mine ears hast thou opened." This is the reading of the Greek version, and the quotation was made from thence by the apostle, whose argument is founded upon the preceding clause, which is the same in the Hebrew text and in the Greek version, namely, that Christ took away legal sacrifices, that he might establish obedience to God's will in offering himself for the sins of men. The variation may be accounted for by error of copyists, whichever sense is correct.—See *A. Clarke, Kennicott, Morison*.

7. Ancient books were not bound in volumes, but were written on long strips of parchment, and rolled upon rollers.

Ver. 11—17. David may here be pleading for an interest in those mercies, and in that salvation, which he proclaimed to others; or, Christ may be supposed to speak, in the depth of his humiliation, when our iniquities met upon him in his agony in the garden, and his sufferings on the cross. Christ, having done his Father's will, and finished his work, and given orders for the preaching of the gospel to every creature, we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace.

Lord, thou hast not spared thy Son, nor withheld him; withhold not thou thy tender mercies then, which thou hast laid up for us in him; for wilt thou not with him also freely give us all things? Rom. 8. 32. The best saints are in continual danger, and see themselves undone, if they are not continually preserved by the grace of God, ver. 11; and the everlasting loving kindness and truth of God are what we have to depend upon for preservation to the heavenly kingdom, 61. 7.

This may encourage us in reference to the guilt of sin, that Jesus Christ has done that towards our discharge from it, which sacrifice and offering could not do. See here the frightful view the psalmist

had of sin, ver. 12. This made the discovery of a Redeemer so welcome. He saw his iniquities to be evils, the worst of evils, innumerable, he saw they compassed him about; in all the reviews of his life, and his reflections upon each step of it, he discovered something amiss. The threatening consequences of his sin surrounded him, took hold upon him; look which way he would, he saw some mischief waiting for him, which he was conscious his sins had deserved. The sight and sense of our sins in their own colours, would drive us to distraction, if we had not at the same time some sight of a Saviour. Where the bliss of an immortal soul is concerned, delays are dangerous, therefore, O Lord, make haste to help me.

No iniquities were committed by Christ. He was conceived, born, and lived without sin, knew none, nor did any. But the sins of his people, which were imputed to him, laid upon him, and which he voluntarily took and bore, he reckoned for his own, and was responsible for them. He could not see the end of these iniquities, they being so numerous; or he could not bear to look upon them, they being so filthy, and he so pure and holy; or they caused his Father's countenance to be hid from him. Therefore his heart failed, as man, Ps. 22. 14, though supported by his Divine nature; and by his Divine Father, and eternal Spirit; he failed not, nor was discouraged, Is. 42. 4. This shows the truth of his human nature, the greatness of men's sins, the strictness of Divine justice, and what strength was necessary to accomplish man's salvation.—(2.)

This may encourage us to look for victory over our spiritual enemies that seek after our souls to destroy them, ver. 14, 15. If Christ has triumphed over them, we, through him, shall be more than conquerors. Both the conversion of a sinner, and the glorification of a saint, are great disappointments to Satan; who does his utmost to hinder both; now, our Lord Jesus having undertaken to bring about the salvation of all his chosen, we may in faith pray, that, both these ways, the great adversary may be confounded. When a child of God is brought into that horrible pit, and the miry clay, Satan thinks he has gained his point; but he shall rage when he sees the brand plucked out of the fire.

This may encourage all that seek God,

and love his salvation, to rejoice in him, and to praise him, ver. 16. They love his salvation, that great salvation of which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, which the Redeemer undertook to work out, not only as salvation from hell, but salvation from sin. They that seek God, shall rejoice in him, for he will not only be found of them, but will be their bountiful rewarder. They that love his salvation, shall be filled with the joy of his salvation, and thus they shall have a heaven upon earth. Blessed are they that are thus still praising God. For all that seek the Lord shall rejoice in him; and all that love his salvation shall say, The Lord be magnified.

No griefs or poverty can render those miserable who fear the Lord. There is a throne of grace to which they have the boldest access. Their God, and all that he hath or doth, is the ground of their joy. His inexhaustible fulness, adapted to their wants, the prayer of faith can unlock. The promises are sure, the moment of fulfilment hastens forward.—(10.)

To this ultimate issue of things the church directs her views. He who once came in great humility, shall come again in glorious majesty. Make no tarrying, O our God; but, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Rev. 22. 20.—(32.)

13—17. These verses also form the 70th psalm.

PSALM XLI.

God's kindness and truth have often been the support and comfort of the saints, when they have most experienced men's unkindness. David found his enemies very barbarous, but his God very gracious. (1.) He comforts himself in his communion with God; by faith receiving and laying hold of God's promises to him, ver. 1—3, and lifting up his heart in prayer to God, ver. 4. (2.) He here represents the malice of his enemies against him, their reflections upon him, and their conduct toward him, ver. 5—9. He leaves his case with God, not doubting but that he would own and favour him, ver. 10—12; and so the psalm concludes with praise to God, ver. 13.

Title. The title of this psalm in the Syriac version is, A psalm of David when he appointed overseers to take care of the poor. In the Arabic it is, A prophecy concerning the incarnation, and the kiss of Judas.

Ver. 1—4. The people of God are not

exempted from poverty, sickness, or any outward affliction, but the Lord will consider their case and proportion their supplies. He will deliver them from trouble, preserve their lives, and give them blessings on earth as long as is good for them. He will not deliver them unto the will of their enemies, and even upon the bed of sickness he will communicate strength and consolation. The Lord will strengthen the believer in body and mind, on the bed of languishing, on which he has long lain sick, he will make all his bed; a very condescending expression, alluding to the care of those that attend sick people, especially of mothers for their children when they are sick, which is to make their beds easy for them. After his Lord's example the believer hath learned to consider his poor and afflicted brethren. In them he sees the once suffering Saviour, gratitude to Christ and love to his people, disposes him to supply their wants as he has opportunity. Thus he will show the reality of his faith, and obtains the assurance of gracious supports when afflictions fall to his share. He shall be blessed upon the earth; this branch of godliness, as much as any other, has the promise of the life that now is, and is usually recompensed with temporal blessings. But nothing is so distressing to the contrite believer as a fear or sense of the Divine displeasure, or of sin in his heart. Pain and sickness remind him to pray for pardoning mercy, and the healing of his soul, which is wounded and diseased because he hath sinned against the Lord.

Sin is the sickness of the soul, pardoning mercy heals it, renewing grace heals it; and this spiritual healing we should be more earnest for than for bodily health.

Ver. 5—13. David often complains of the conduct of his enemies. They desired his death, and that his name should perish. When he had served his generation, he did die, Acts 13. 36; but his name lives and flourishes, to this day, in the sacred writings, and will, to the end of time; for the memory of the just is, and shall be blessed.

We complain, and justly, of the want of sincerity in our days, and that there is scarcely any true friendship to be found among men; but it seems, by ver. 6, that the former days were no better; David's friends had nothing of that affection for him in their hearts, which they made pro-

fession of; nor was that the worst, they made invidious remarks upon every thing he said or did. His heart gathereth iniquity to itself, puts ill constructions upon every thing; and then he tells it his companions, that they may tell it others.

They said that he would never recover from this sickness, ver. 7, 8. We are not to think it strange, if, when good men are sick, there are those that hope for their death, as well as those that fear it, which makes the world not worthy of them.

One particularly, in whom he had reposed great confidence, took part with his enemies, ver. 9. My own familiar friend; probably Ahithophel, 2 Sam. 15. 31, who had been his bosom-friend, and prime minister. Let us not think it strange, if we receive abuses from those we suppose to be friends: David did, and the Son of David; for of Judas the traitor, David here, in the Spirit, spake; our Saviour so expounds this, and therefore gave Judas the sop, John 13. 18, 26. Have not we ourselves carried it thus perfidiously toward God? We eat of his bread, daily, and yet lift up the heel against him, as Jeshurun, that waxed fat and kicked, Deut. 32. 15.

The most humble and upright among men may well expect to meet with enmity, contempt, treachery, and ingratitude, when the holy Jesus was not only despised and rejected of men, but betrayed and sold by one of his own apostles, who ungratefully spurned his benefactor with scorn and insulting baseness.

David prayed to God that his enemies might be disappointed. He said nothing to them, but turned himself to God, ver. 10. He had prayed in reference to the guilt of his sins, ver. 4, Lord, be merciful to me; and now, in reference to the insults of his enemies; that prayer will suit every case. God's mercy has in it redress for every grievance. He adds, Raise me up that I may requite them, that I may render them good for evil; so some; for that was David's practice, 7. 4; 35. 13. Or, that, as a king, I may put them under the marks of my just displeasure. Perhaps in this prayer is a prophecy of the exaltation of Christ, that he might be a just avenger of all the wrongs done to him and to his people.

He assured himself that they would be disappointed, ver. 11. Though we may not take pleasure in the fall of our enemies, we may take pleasure in the frus-

trating of their designs. That would be a token of God's favour to him, and a certain evidence that he did favour him, and would continue to do so. When we can discern the favour of God, in any mercy personal or public, that doubles it.

He depends upon God, who had thus delivered him from many an evil work, to preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as Paul, 2 Tim. 4. 18. The best man holds his integrity no longer than God upholds him; for if left to ourselves, we shall not only fall, but fall away. It is great comfort to us, that, however weak we are, God is able to uphold us in our integrity, and will do it if we commit the keeping of it to him. If the grace of God did not take constant care of us, we should not be upheld.

In the anticipation of faith and hope, let us, while on earth, solace ourselves under our conflicts and sorrows, by beginning this work of heaven, and give our cordial assent to those praises which the redeemed on earth and in heaven are rendering to their God and Saviour; saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting.

9. What we translate, "Mine own familiar friend," is in the original, "The man of my peace." The man who, with "peace be to thee," kissed me, and thus gave the agreed on signal to my murderers, that I was the person they should seize, hold fast, and carry away.—*A. Clarke.*

The word Amen denotes unity of faith and spirit. It implies both a wishing of any thing so to be, and a persuasion by faith that so it shall be. In this sense it is used at the end of blessings, prayers, and imprecations.—*Ainsworth*, see *Morison*. It is used at the end of prayer to denote our desire and hope to be heard and answered.—*Butterworth*.

PSALM XLII.

This psalm we may take for a conflict between sense and faith; sense objecting, and faith answering. (1.) Faith begins with holy desires toward God, and communion with him, ver. 1, 2. Sense complains of the darkness and cloudiness of the present condition, aggravated by the remembrance of former enjoyments, ver. 3, 4. Faith silences the complaint with the assurance of a good issue at last, ver. 5. (2.) Sense renews complaints of the present dark and melancholy state, ver. 6, 7. Faith holds up the heart, notwithstanding, with hope that the day will dawn, ver. 8. Sense repeats lamentations, ver. 9, 10, and sighs out the same remonstrance as before of its grievances. Faith prevails, ver. 11. If we are in outward affliction,

or inward distress, we may accommodate to ourselves the expressions we find here; if not, let us sympathize with those whose case they speak plainly.

Ver. 1—5. Holy love to God, as the chief good and our happiness, is the power of godliness, the very life and soul of religion, without which, all outward professions and performances are but a shell; now here we have some of the expressions of that love.

Before the psalmist records his doubts, and fears, and griefs, which had sorely shaken him, he premises this, That he looked upon the living God as his chief good, and had set his heart upon him accordingly, and was resolved to live and die by him; and casting anchor thus at first, he rides out the storm.

The object of his desire is God, not the ordinances themselves, but the God of the ordinances. A gracious soul can take little satisfaction in God's courts, if it do not meet with God himself there. It desires to have more of the tokens of his favour, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, and the earnestness of his glory. Living souls can never take up their rest anywhere short of a living God. To appear before God is the desire of the upright, as it is the dread of the hypocrite.

The believer, in proportion to his spiritual mindedness, will either rejoice in, or mourn after the living God. The thirsty animal does not more eagerly pant for water, than the believer desires the consolations of the Holy Spirit, and the tokens of the love and presence of God. Nothing else can afford him satisfaction; temptations, afflictions, discouragements, and delays, increase the spiritual appetite, and make him pant the more for these living waters.

Observe also his mourning for God's present withdrawals, and the want of the benefit of solemn ordinances, ver. 3. He did not think it enough to shed a tear or two, at parting from the sanctuary; but as long as he continued under forced absence from that place of his delight he wept, day and night. All true believers who are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, constantly miss them, and therefore should constantly mourn for the want, till they are restored to them again.

Two things aggravated his grief:

1. The reproaches of his enemies. Note; Those are mistaken, who think that, when

they have robbed us of our bibles, and our ministers, and our solemn assemblies, they have robbed us of our God: for we know where our God is, and where to find him, when we know not where his ark is, nor where to find that. Wherever we are, there is a way open heaven-ward. But by base reflections on God and his people, they added affliction to the afflicted, and that they aimed at. Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul, than what is intended to shake its confidence in God.

2. The remembrance of his former liberties and enjoyments, ver. 4. Our powers of reflection and anticipation add to the grievance of the present time. It was not the remembrance of the pleasures or the entertainments of his court and house that afflicted him; but the remembrance of the free access he formerly had to God's house, and the pleasure he had in attending the sacred solemnities there. David was very diligent in attending God's house, and joining in public ordinances. This added to the pleasure of it, that he was accompanied with a multitude. The more in the service of God, the more like to heaven. He went to keep holy days, not to keep them in vain mirth and recreation, but in religious exercises. Solemn days are spent most comfortably in solemn assemblies.

His sorrow was upon a very good account, and yet it must not prevail to depress his spirits, ver. 5; he therefore communes with his own heart. This may be taken as an inquiring question; Let the cause of this uneasiness be duly weighed; is it a just cause? Or it may be taken as an expostulating question; those that commune much with their own hearts, will often have to chide them. See the cure of it. A believing confidence in God is a sovereign antidote against prevailing despondency, and disquiet of spirit. And therefore, when we chide ourselves for dejection, we must charge ourselves to hope in God; when the soul embraces itself, it sinks; if it catch hold on the power and promise of God, it keeps the head above the billows. And what is our support under our present woes but this, that we shall yet praise God—that they shall not prevent, or abate our endless halleluighs? That we shall have comfort in Him. David's believing expectation of this kept him from sinking.

We may have great cause to mourn for sin, and to pray against prevailing im-

piety; but extreme dejection springs from unbelief and a rebellious will: we should therefore strive and pray against it, and endeavour to hope in God, persuaded that we shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Ver. 6—11. David had communed with his own heart about its own bitterness, and had not as yet found relief; therefore he turns to God, and opens before him the trouble. We cannot still these winds and waves; but we know who can. The way to forget our miseries, is, to remember the God of our mercies. He had often remembered God, and was comforted, and therefore had recourse to that expedient now. He was now driven to the utmost borders of the land of Canaan; but he kept his secret communion with Him. Distance and time could not make David forget that which his heart was so much upon.

He saw his troubles coming from God's wrath, and that discouraged him, ver. 7. It may be meant of the terrors of his mind, under the apprehensions of God's anger. Whatever waves and billows of affliction go over us at any time, we must call them God's waves and his billows, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and may encourage ourselves to hope that though we are threatened, we shall not be ruined. Let not good men think it strange, if they are exercised with many and various trials.

If one trouble follow hard after another, if the rebukes of God from above, the assaults of hell from beneath, and the insults of men, all seem to combine for our ruin, let us remember they are all appointed and overruled by the Lord. We deserve more than all we suffer on earth; and let us remember how Jesus said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"—he suffered from the cruelty of man, the rage of Satan, and the justice of the Father, yet he was heard and delivered.

David expected his deliverance from God's favour, ver. 8. Observe he regards the favour of God, as the fountain of all the good he looked for. God's conferring of his favour, is called his commanding it; this intimates the freeness of it; it intimates also the efficacy of it; he speaks, and it is done. Observe what he promised for himself to God. He will rejoice in God. In silence and solitude, when we are

retired from the hurries of the world, we must be pleasing ourselves with the thoughts of God's goodness. Or in the night of affliction; even in tribulation, Rom. 5. 2, 3. It is God's prerogative to give songs in the night, Job, 35. 10. In the Saviour's name let us hope and pray. One word from him will calm every storm, and turn midnight darkness into the light of noon; the bitterest complaints into joyful praises. He will seek to God in a constant dependence upon him. Our believing expectation of mercy must quicken our prayers for it. God is the God of our life, in whom we live and move, the Author and Giver of all our comforts; and therefore to whom should we apply ourselves by prayer, but to him? And from him what good may not we expect? It is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we stand up to make request.

He complains of the insolence of his enemies, and yet comforts himself in God as his friend, ver. 9—11. David ought not to have concluded that God had forgotten him, and cast him off. His comfort is, that God is his rock, ver. 9. A rock to build upon, a rock to take shelter in; the Rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength, would be his rock, his strength in the inner man, both for doing and suffering. To him he had access with confidence. His griefs and fears were not silenced, though they were again and again answered; but here, at length, his faith came off conqueror, by encouraging himself to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay himself upon his God. We have need to press the same thing over and over again upon our hearts, and all little enough. He adds, And *my* God, all that he is, all that he has is mine, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise; this thought enabled him to triumph over all his griefs and fears; God's being with the saints in heaven, and being their God, will wipe away all tears from their eyes, Rev. 21. 3, 4.

Then let us never think that the God of our life, and the Rock of our salvation, hath forgotten us, if we have made his mercy, truth, and power, our refuge. Even though we cannot but go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy; and though the reproaches of the ungodly are painful as a sword in the bones; yet we should struggle against despondency, still hope in, and praise God. His favour will be the health and help of our souls, and

he will be our shield and exceeding great reward. Thus the psalmist strove against his despondency: at length his faith and hope obtained the victory, and he concluded in a resigned frame of mind.

*6. The river Jordan and the mountains of Hermon were the most striking features of the Holy Land. Mirza, or the "little hill" as in the margin, probably means Sion, which was little in comparison of the Hermons.—*A. Clarke.*

This psalm was evidently written by David when in deep affliction. If we compare it with the history of the conspiracy of Absalom aided by Ahithophel, who had deserted his sovereign, 2 Sam. 15. and also with the character of the country whither David had fled, we have a key to the psalm which elucidates it with equal beauty and propriety.—*See Randolph.*

PSALM XLIII.

This psalm, it is likely, was penned upon the same occasion with the former, and may be looked upon as a sequel to it.

David here appeals to God concerning the injuries that were done him by his enemies, ver. 1, 2. He prays to God to restore to him the free enjoyment of public ordinances, ver. 3, 4. He endeavours to still the tumult of his spirit, with lively hope and confidence in God, ver. 5.

David here makes his application to God by faith and prayer, as his judge, his strength, his guide, his joy, his hope. Under the returns of distress and sorrow, we should again and again have recourse to the effectual and only remedy, faith and prayer.

As his Judge, his righteous Judge, ver. 1. Observe, 1. Who his enemies were, with whom he had this struggle. Here was a sinful body of men, whom he calls an ungodly, or unmerciful nation; those that are unmerciful, make it appear that they are ungodly, for those that have any fear or love of their master, will have compassion on their fellow-servants. 2. What is his prayer with reference to them. As to the quarrel God had with him for sin, he prays, "Enter not into judgment with me, for then I shall be condemned; but as to the quarrel his enemies had with him, he prays, Lord, judge me, plead my cause, and in thy providence appear on my behalf." We must reckon our cause sufficiently pleaded, if we are delivered, though our enemies are not destroyed.

As his Strength, his all-sufficient strength, ver. 2; From whom all my

strength is derived; in whom I strengthen myself, who hast often strengthened me, and without whom I am weak; and utterly unable either to do or suffer any thing for thee. David now went mourning; destitute of spiritual joys, yet he found God to be the God of his strength. If we cannot comfort ourselves in God, we may stay ourselves upon him, and may have spiritual supports when we want spiritual delights. David here pleads with God; Thou art the God on whom I depend as my strength; why then dost thou cast me off? This was a mistake; for God never cast off any that trusted in him, whatever melancholy apprehensions they may have had of their own state. It is hard to reconcile the mighty force of the church's enemies with the almighty power of the God of the church; but the day will reconcile them, when all his enemies shall become his footstool.

As his Guide, his faithful guide, ver. 3. His heart is not upon his family-comforts, his court, or his diversions; he could bear the want of these, but he is impatient to see God's tabernacles again; thither he would be brought back. In order to this, he prays. Send out thy light and thy truth; let me have this as a fruit of thy favour, which is light, and the performance of thy promise, which is truth. We need desire no more to make us happy, than the good that flows from God's favour, and is included in his promise. That mercy, that truth, is enough, is all; and when we see these in God's providences, we see ourselves under a very safe conduct. Note; Those whom God leads, he leads to his holy hill, and to his tabernacles; those therefore who pretend to be led by the Spirit, and yet turn their backs upon ordinances, deceive themselves. He prays that God by his grace would bring him into communion with himself, and prepare him for the sight and enjoyment of himself in the other world. We are still to pray for God's light and truth, the Spirit of light and truth, who supplies the want of Christ's bodily presence, to lead us into the mystery of godliness, and to guide us in the way to heaven.

As his Joy, his exceeding joy. If God guide him to his tabernacles, if he restore him to his former liberties, he will get as near as he can unto God, his exceeding joy, ver. 4. The nearer we come, the closer we cleave to God, the better.

We come in vain to holy ordinances, if we do not in them come to the holy God. Those that come unto God, must come to him as their exceeding joy, not only as their future bliss, but as their present joy; and that joy, far exceeding all joys of sense and time. The phrase, in the original, is very emphatical—unto God the gladness of my joy, or of my triumph. Whatever we rejoice or triumph in, God must be the joy of it. When we come to God as our exceeding joy, our comforts in him must be the matter of our praises to him as God, and our God. David excelled at the harp. God is to be praised with the best we have.

As his Hope, his never-failing hope, ver. 5. Here, as before, David quarrels with himself for his dejections and despondencies, owns he did ill to yield to them; Why art thou cast down, O my soul? He then quiets himself in the believing expectation of giving glory to God, and of enjoying glory with God. This is what we must live and die by.

Let us discard dishonourable fears, and pray more earnestly that the Lord would send forth the truth of his word, and the light of his Spirit, to guide us into the way of holiness, peace, and salvation. Through Christ, our altar and sacrifice, we may here find joy in God; for which we should bless and praise his name; but ever look forward to the season, when God, our exceeding joy, will end our sorrows, and complete our happiness.

The chief desire of the christian, like that of the prophet in distress, is to be saved from sin as well as sorrow; to be instructed in the way of righteousness by the light of heavenly wisdom, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, to see the fulfilment of the promises in him who is the Truth, and to be led by this light and truth from the land of his pilgrimage to the holy hill and the mansions of the just in the New Jerusalem.—(32.)

It is supposed that this psalm originally formed a part of the 42nd. It stands so in many Hebrew manuscripts.

PSALM XLIV.

This is a psalm upon occasion of some public calamity, either pressing or threatening. In it the church is taught, (1.) To own with thankfulness, to the glory of God, the great things he had done for their fathers, ver. 1—8. (2.) To exhibit a memorial of their present calamitous estate, ver. 9—16. (3.) To protest their

integrity and adherence to God, notwithstanding, ver. 17—22. To petition for succour and relief, ver. 22—26.

We have no clear proof on what occasion, or by whom this psalm was penned, nor does it fully suit any period in the history of the Old Testament; it is most probable, that this psalm was written for the use of the church in every age, when persecuted for conscience' sake. The remnant of suffering believers are here represented as recollecting the work of God for Israel in former ages, as an encouragement unto them to hope for his further protection and interposition.

Some observe that most of the psalms which are entitled Maschil, psalms of instruction, are sorrowful psalms; for afflictions give instructions, and sorrow of spirit opens the ear to them; Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest.

Ver. 1—8. Observe the commemoration of the great things God had formerly done for Israel. It is a debt which every age owes to posterity, to keep an account of God's works of wonder, and to transmit the knowledge of them to the next generation. Thus shall one generation praise his works to another, 145. 4; the fathers to the children shall make known his truth, Isa. 38. 19. Of those we have in the scripture a sure word of history, as sure as the word of prophecy. Former experiences of God's power and goodness are strong supports to faith, and powerful pleas in prayer under present calamities. See Judg. 6. 13.

The many victories Israel obtained over the Canaanites under Joshua, were not to be attributed to themselves, nor to their own merit, but to God's favour and free grace, Deut. 9. 5, 6. The less praise this allows us, the more comfort it administers, that we may see all our successes and enlargements coming from the favour of God and the light of his countenance. God fought for Israel, else they had fought in vain. It was God who planted Israel in that good land, as the careful husbandman plants a tree, from which he promises himself fruit: see 80. 8. This is applicable to the planting of the christian church in the world, by the preaching of the gospel. Paganism was wonderfully driven out, as the Canaanites, not all at once, but by little and little; not by any human policy or power, for God chose to do it by the weak and foolish things of the world.

Christ by his Spirit went forth conquering and to conquer; and he that by his power and goodness planted a church for himself in the world, will certainly support it by the same power and goodness; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

When we hear of the wonderful works wrought for Israel, or the still more glorious interpositions of God in the first spread of the gospel, we should learn to hope and pray for displays of his power and love, as efficacious though not so miraculous.

Observe the good use made of this record. They had taken God for their sovereign Lord, they had always applied to him by prayer for deliverance, when in distress. Observe the strength of their faith in the power of God, ver. 4. They trusted and triumphed in him, ver. 5, 6. Through thy name, by thy wisdom directing us, thy power strengthening us and working for us, and thy promise securing success to us. They had made him their joy and praise, ver. 8. Every member of the church obeys and seeks protection from God as his King. They all renounce self-confidence, and maintain their confidence in God; they have nothing to glory in but their relation to God. Let him that glories, glory in the Lord, and let that for ever exclude all other boasting. But let them praise his name for ever; if they have the comfort of his name, let them give unto him the glory due to it.

Ver. 9—16. Of all the events recorded here, the history of the church gives many affecting illustrations. The believer must have times of temptation, affliction, and discouragement; and the church must have seasons of persecution, when her witnesses must prophesy in sackcloth. At such times the people of God will be ready to think that he hath cast them off, and that his name and truth will be dishonoured, and they could the better endure their trials, did they not continually hear the blasphemies of their enemies. God's people, when cast down, are tempted to think themselves cast off, and forsaken of God; but it is a mistake, Rom. 11. 1.

Thus far was right, that they looked above the instruments of their trouble, and to God, as well knowing that their worst enemies had no power against them, but what was permitted from above. If persecuted for righteousness' sake, we are and shall be safe and happy, 1 Pet. 4. 12. 16.

Ver. 17—26. In all our afflictions, specially in our sufferings for conscience sake, we should seek to have a conscience void of offence. We should be careful not to seek relief by any sinful compliance; and should continually meditate on the truth, purity, and knowledge of our heart-searching God. Forgetting God, was a heart sin, and stretching out the hand to a strange god, was often a secret sin, Ezek. 8. 12. But heart sins and secret sins are known to God, and must be reckoned for; he knows the secrets of the heart, and therefore is an infallible judge of the words and actions.

When the heart turns back, ver. 18, the steps will soon decline; for it is the evil heart of unbelief that inclines us to depart from God. While our troubles do not drive us from our duty to God, we should not suffer them to drive us from our comfort in God. Let us be careful that prosperity and ease do not render us careless and lukewarm; persecution may come on speedily, and we should not forget the state of the church, not yet delivered from her bondage and captivity.

The formalist escapes persecution by turning with the stream, but the church of God cannot be prevailed on, by the bitterest persecution, to forget God or deal falsely in his covenant; the believer's heart doth not turn back from God. This has been proved in thousands of instances. The Spirit of prophecy had reference to those who suffered unto death, for the testimony of Christ, Rom. 8. 36. Though covered with the shadow of death, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter, yet nothing can separate from the love of God, none go beyond his purpose and permission; and in all these things believers shall be more than conquerors, Rom. 8. 35—39. For though the Lord seem to hide his face, and to forget the affliction and oppression of his people, yet he that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when he does not immediately appear for the deliverance of his people, they are tempted to think he sleeps. The expression is figurative, but it was applicable to Christ in the letter, Matt. 8. 24.

Observe the pleas used, ver. 25, 26. Not their own merit and righteousness, but the poor sinner's pleas. Their own misery made them objects of the Divine compassion. None that belong to Christ shall be cast off for ever, but every one of them shall be completely and eternally saved.

The purchased, promised, and constantly flowing forth, and offered mercy of God to believers, does away all objections and every doubt arising from our sins, unworthiness, and ill deserving; this is the import of "Redeem us for thy mercies' sake."—(18.)

PSALM XLV.

This psalm is an illustrious prophecy of Messiah the prince, and points to him as a Bridegroom espousing the church to himself, and as a King ruling in it, and for it. It describes the mutual love that subsists between Christ and his believing people. The preface speaks the excellency of the song, ver. 1. The psalm speaks, (1.) Of the royal bridegroom, who is Christ. The transcendent excellency of his person, ver. 2. The glory of his victories, ver. 3—5. (2.) The righteousness of his government, ver. 6, 7. The splendour of his court, ver. 8, 9. (3.) Of the royal bride, which is the church. Her consent gained, ver. 10, 11. The nuptials solemnized, ver. 12—15. The consequence of this union, ver. 16, 17. Our Saviour compares the kingdom of heaven to the solemnity of a royal nuptial, Matt. 22. 2; 25. 1. Of the Lord Jesus Christ the prophet speaks this, of him and of no other man; and to him, ver. 6, 7, it is applied in the New Testament, Heb. 1. 8, 9, nor can it be understood of any other.

In many respects this psalm resembles the Song of Solomon.

Ver. 1—5. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit stirred up this meditation in the psalmist's heart, so that he spake freely of the things which he had been considering about the King, the promised Messiah. His tongue was guided by the Spirit of God as entirely as the pen is by the hand of a ready writer, ver. 1.

It is touching the King, Jesus, and his kingdom and government. Those who speak of Christ, speak of a good matter, no subject so noble, so copious, so fruitful, so profitable; it is a shame that this good matter is not more the matter of our discourse. This song was a confession with the mouth, of faith in the heart, concerning Christ and his church. We speak best of Christ and Divine things, when we speak from the heart that which has warmed and affected us.

In these verses, the Lord Jesus is pre-

sented as most beautiful and amiable in himself. They that have admiration and affection for Christ, love to go to him and tell him so. Thus we must profess our faith, that we see his beauty; and our love, that we are pleased with it. Jesus Christ is in himself, and in the eyes of all believers, more amiable and lovely than the children of men. The beauties of the Lord Jesus, as God, as Mediator, far surpass those which the most excellent of the children of men are endowed with; there is more in Christ to engage our love, than there is or can be in any creature. This lower world and its charms, are in danger of drawing away our hearts from Christ; therefore we are concerned to understand how much he excels them all, and how much more worthy he is of our love.

He is fairer than the children of men. God has done more for him than for any of the children of men, and all his kindness to the children of men is for his sake, and passes through him. He has grace, and he has it for us. By his word, his promise, his gospel, the good will of God is made known to us, and the good work of God is begun and carried on in us. He received all grace from God, all the endowments that were requisite to qualify him for his work and office as Mediator, that from his fulness we might receive, John 1. 16. From this grace poured into his lips, proceeded those gracious words which all admired, Luke 4. 22.

The psalmist, ver. 3—5, joyfully foretells the progress and success of the Messiah, in setting up his kingdom and overcoming his enemies. He goes forth as a conqueror in unrivalled might. His right hand readily executes his purposes, whether of mercy or vengeance. The arrows of conviction are very terrible in the hearts of sinners till they are humbled and reconciled; but the arrows of vengeance will be unspeakably more so to his enemies who refuse to submit. All who have seen his glory and tasted his grace, rejoice to see him by his word and Spirit reduce enemies and strangers to his dominion.

In his gospel he appears great and excellent, bright and blessed, in the honour and majesty which the Father has laid upon him. Christ, both in his person and in his gospel, had nothing of external glory or majesty, for he had no form nor comeliness; he took upon him the form of a servant; he was all spiritual glory, spiritual majesty.

Ver. 6—9. The throne of this almighty King is established for ever, Heb. 1. 8; his name is Immanuel; his sceptre is stayed in justice and mercy; he loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity; and while his Holy Spirit leads his people to look to his cross, he teaches them to see the evil of sin and the beauty of holiness; so that none of them can abuse his grace for an encouragement to continue in sin. The Mediator is God, else he had neither been able to do the Mediator's work, nor fit to wear the Mediator's crown. God the Father, as his God in respect to his human nature, and mediatorial offices, hath given to him the Holy Spirit without measure. Thus anointed to be Prophet, Priest, and King, he has the pre-eminence in the gladdening gifts and graces of the Spirit; and from his fulness communicates them to his fellows, his brethren in human nature, who are united to him, and interested in him.

The Spirit is called the oil of gladness, because of the delight wherewith Christ was filled, in carrying on his undertaking. He was anointed with the Spirit above all his fellows, above all those that were anointed, whether priests or kings. His anointing denotes the power and glory to which he is exalted; he is invested in all the dignities and authorities of the Messiah; and his anointing with the oil of gladness, denotes the joy that was set before him, Heb. 12. 2, both in the light of his Father's countenance, Acts 2. 28, and in the success of his undertaking, which he shall see, and be satisfied, Isa. 53. 11. The salvation of sinners is the joy of angels, Luke 15. 10, but much more of the Son.

In proportion as we are conformed to his holy image, we may expect the gladdening influences of the Comforter; and while Christ's name is as ointment poured forth, the fragrant of heavenly affections will recommend our conversation to those who are spiritually minded, and render us meet for his palace above. The garments of princes are often imbued with costly perfumes, those of the high priests were anointed with holy ointment. Thus the Messiah is represented—the excellences of his character, the suitableness of his offices, and the sufficiency of his grace seem to be intended.

The king seated in majesty and glory on his throne, is represented as surrounded with a splendid train. All true believers

are born from above; they are children of the King of kings, they attend the throne of the Lord Jesus daily with prayers and praises, which is their honour, and he is pleased to reckon it his. The church in general, constituted of these particular believers, is here compared to the queen herself; the queen-consort, whom, by an everlasting covenant, he hath betrothed to himself; she stands at his right hand, near to him, and receiving honour from him, in the richest array, in gold of Ophir. This is the bride, the Lamb's wife, whose graces, which are her ornaments, are compared to fine linen, clean and white, Rev. 19. 8, for their purity; here to gold of Ophir, for their costliness; for as we owe our redemption, so we owe our ~~adorning~~ ^{adorning}, not to corruptible things, but to the precious blood of the Son of God, and are enriched by his bounty.

6. The word *Elohim* here, is the very first term or name by which the supreme God has made himself known to the children of men: see Gen. 1. 1; and this very verse the apostle, Heb. 1. 8, has applied to Jesus Christ.—If the apostle did not believe Jesus Christ to be the true and eternal God, he must have utterly misapplied this scripture.—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 10—17. God, who said to the Son, Thy throne is for ever and ever, here speaks to the church, whom, upon the account of her espousals to the Son, he calls his daughter.

He tells her of the duties expected from her, which ought to be considered by all those that come into relation to the Lord Jesus. She must renounce all others.

Indeed, next to the Redeemer's excellences, those of his espoused church are most worthy to be celebrated; not what she was in herself, but what he hath made her in consequence of his love and choice. If we desire to share these blessings, we should hearken to Christ's word, and incline our hearts to seek a union with him. We must renounce, and even forget our carnal and sinful attachments and pursuits. Other lords must be disavowed, for he must be our Lord as well as our Saviour; all idols must be thrown away that we may give him our whole heart, and render him unreserved worship, as well as seek all our happiness from him alone.

God is no such severe Lord and Master as to require us to take off our affections from those things which nature makes dear unto us, without proposing somewhat incomparably more excellent to fix them upon. The love of the great

King is an abundantly satisfactory recompense for parting with all things in this world. But without assiduous meditation on heavenly things, as better, more noble, and suitable for our affections to be fixed upon, we can never rightly be freed from inordinate love of earthly things.—(52.)

Here is good encouragement given, thus to break off from former alliances. The beauty of holiness, both on the church, and on particular believers, is, in the sight of Christ, of great price, and very amiable. Where that is, he says, This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it: She must reverence him, must love, honour, and obey him, ver. 11. We must worship him as God, and our Lord; for this is the will of God, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; nay, in so doing, it is reckoned that they honour the Father; if we confess that Christ is Lord, and pay our homage to him accordingly, it is to the glory of God the Father, Phil. 2. 11. She shall be very splendid, and highly esteemed in the eyes of all, ver. 13. The king's daughters all glorious within.

The church is glorious through the inward graces of the Spirit wrought there. The work of grace is an inward work; it has its seat in the heart or spirit of man, and is a glorious one in its author, original, and usefulness. It is the workmanship of the Spirit, it is the image of Christ upon the soul, a partaking of the Divine nature, pure and spotless. It is clear of all sin, there is none in it, nor any come from it. It is the pledge, earnest, and beginning of the saints' meetness for glory. It is all glorious, and so are the subjects of it as born of God. There is nothing glorious in the old man or corrupt nature; but in the new man, or work of grace upon the soul, every thing is glorious, and will issue in eternal glory and happiness. Her clothing is of wrought gold. The robe of Christ's righteousness, which he has wrought out for his church, the Father imputes unto her and bestows upon her. Faith receives it at his hand, and puts it on as a clothing to appear in before God, of wrought gold, rich and valuable, splendid and glorious, substantial and durable.—(27.)

The true believer's privileges, as well as the most estimable parts of his character, are internal and undiscerned by an ungodly world; yet the holiness of his conversation proves the inward adorning

of his soul, and that he is arrayed with the robe of righteousness and salvation.

Note; The glory of the church is spiritual glory, and that is indeed all glory; it is the glory of the soul, and that is the man; it is glory in God's sight, and it is an earnest of eternal glory.

She shall be brought to the king, ver. 14, 15. None are brought to Christ, but whom the Father brings; and he has undertaken to do it; none besides are so brought to the king, ver. 14, as to enter into the king's palace, ver. 15. This intimates a bringing of the spouse to Christ, in the conversion of souls to him, 2 Cor. 11. 2; Rom. 7. 4. And in the completing of the mystical body, and the glorification of all the saints, at the end of time; then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be made completely ready, when all that belong to the election of grace, shall be called in, and called home, and all gathered together to Christ, 2 Thess. 2. 1. Observe her raiment of needle-work; the righteousness of Christ, the graces of the Spirit, wrought by Divine wisdom.

The robe of righteousness, and garments of salvation, the change of raiment Christ has put upon her. This introduction of the church to Christ will be when she, being as a bride adorned and prepared for her husband, will be brought unto him, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Such as strictly adhere to Christ, loving him in the singleness of their hearts, incorrupt in faith and worship, these are the companions of the bride, who are partakers of the same grace, enjoy the same privileges, and share in one common salvation. These follow the footsteps of the flock, Cant. 1. 8, walk after the church in the paths of doctrine and duty, are followers of her as she is of the Lord, in the word and ordinances, and in the exercise of faith and patience. These, every one, shall be brought to the King; not one lost or left behind.—(27.)

With gladness and rejoicing shall she be brought; when the prodigal is brought home to his father, it is meet that we should make merry, and be glad, Luke 15. 32; and when the marriage of the Lamb is come, let us be glad and rejoice, Rev. 19. 7; for the day of his espousals is the day of the gladness of his heart, Cant. 3. 11.

The believer, in virtue of union with Christ, and instead of the carnal attachments which have been broken off, enters

into new relations with the people of God, ver. 16. A succession of believers on earth is the effect of the union of the church to Christ, and though as yet the church is despised and persecuted, the time is coming when her sons shall be kings over all the nations of the earth.

The progeny of this marriage shall be illustrious, ver. 16. Instead of the old testament church, the economy of which was waxen old, and ready to vanish away, Heb. 8. 13, there shall be a new testament church, a Gentile church, that shall be grafted into the same olive, and partake of its root and fatness, Rom. 11. 17. The praise of this union shall be perpetual. In the believing hope of our everlasting happiness in the other world, let us always keep up the remembrance of Christ, as our only way thither; and, in assurance of the perpetuating of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, let us transmit the remembrance of him to succeeding generations, that his name may endure for ever.

While the church stands, this song shall perpetuate the honour of Christ in the Gentile church; and the time shall come when the seed of Abraham shall unite in applying it to a greater than any that ever sat upon the throne of Israel or Judah. If, as some think, the sons of Messiah are intended in verse 16, it is then to be regarded as a sublime prediction of that succession of Gentile converts, which in every age shall rise up to pay homage to Him who is at once "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people, Israel."—(47.)

PSALM XLVI.

This psalm encourages us to hope and trust in God, and his power and providence, and his gracious presence with his church in the worst of times. It directs us to give him the glory of what he has done for us, and what he will do. We are here taught, (1.) To take comfort in God, when things look very threatening, ver. 1—5. (2.) To mention, to his praise, the great things he has wrought for his church against its enemies, ver. 6—9. To assure ourselves that God, who has glorified his own name, will glorify it yet again, and to comfort ourselves therewith, ver. 10, 11. We may apply it to our spiritual enemies, and the encouragement we

have that through Christ we shall be more than conquerors over them.

Ver. 1—5. They who have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and live in obedience to him, and dependence on him, may make the power, wisdom, truth, and love of God their refuge and strength. In every urgent danger they will find him a ready and present help.

He has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our Refuge to whom we may flee. Are we oppressed by troubles? Have we work to do, and enemies to contend with? God is our Strength, to bear us up under our burdens, who will by his grace put strength into us, and on whom we may stay ourselves. Are we in distress? He is a Help, a present Help, a Help found, so the word is, one whom we have found to be so; a Help at hand, one that is always near. Or, a Help sufficient, a Help accommodated to every case and exigence; whatever it is, he is a very present Help; we cannot desire a better, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.

If our faith were as strong as our security is good, we need not fear; in the most tremendous dangers, we may triumph in the fullest assurance of security and victory. Though kingdoms and states be in confusion, embroiled in wars, tossed with tumults, and their governments in continual revolution; though their powers combine against the church and people of God, aim at no less than their ruin, and go very near to gain their point; yet will not we fear. If the earth be removed, those have reason to fear who have laid up their treasures on earth, and set their hearts upon it; but not those who have laid up for themselves treasures in heaven, and who can expect to be then most happy, when the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters, who build their confidence on such a floating foundation; but let not those who are led to the Rock that is higher than they, and find firm footing upon that Rock, be alarmed. When we consider what God has provided for the comfort and safety of his church, we shall see reason to have our hearts fixed, and set above the fear of evil tidings.

Here is joy to the church, even in the most sorrowful times, ver. 4. There is a river the streams whereof make glad the

city of God. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, or Shiloah, which went softly by Jerusalem, Isa. 8. 6, 7. Though of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made servieable to the defence of Jerusalem, in Hezekiah's time, Isa. 22. 10, 11. But this must be understood spiritually; the river of the water of life, the graces and consolations of the Holy Spirit, which flow through every part of the church, the city of our God, and through his sacred ordinances, gladdening the heart of every believer, are particularly intended. Or, the Spirit of grace is the river, John 7. 38, 39, the comforts of which are the streams, that make glad the city of our God. God's word and ordinances are rivers and streams with which God makes his saints glad in cloudy and dark days. God himself is to his church a place of broad rivers and streams, Isa. 33. 21. The streams that make glad the city of God are not rapid, but are gentle, like those of Siloam. The spiritual comforts, which are conveyed to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to balance the most loud and noisy threatenings of an angry and malicious world.

It is promised the church shall not be moved, though heaven and earth are shaken, ver. 5. God has assured his church of his special presence with her, and concern for her. The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when it is in ruins. It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us.

Deliverance is assured to the church, though her dangers are very great. God shall help her out of her troubles, and that right early; when the morning appears, very speedily, for he is a present Help; and very seasonably, when things are at the last extremity, and when relief will be most welcome. This may be applied by believers to themselves; if God be in our hearts, by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped; let us therefore trust and not be afraid; all is well, and will end well.

Ver. 6—11. Many deliverances of the Israelites answer to the description in ver. 6, but the spread of the gospel, notwithstanding all opposition, was a fuller illustration of it, and it shall have a still more

glorious completion in the destruction of every antichrist, and the universal spread of true christianity.

All the operations of Providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, ver. 8, and his attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Come and see the effects of desolating judgments, and stand in awe of God; say, How terrible art thou in thy works! Ps. 66. 3. Let all that oppose him see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands. Let all that fear him, trust in him, and not fear the most formidable power armed against the church.

War and peace depend on his word and will, as much as storms and calms at sea do, ver. 9. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; sometimes in pity to the nations, or rather, it may be meant of what he does, in favour of his own people. The total destruction of his enemies is prophetically described by the burning of their weapons of war, Ezek. 39. 9, 10; this intimates likewise the church's perfect security and assurance of lasting peace. Let us pray for the speedy approach of these glorious days, and in silent submission let us worship and trust in our almighty Sovereign.

He does, and will do great things for his own glory, ver. 10. Men will set up themselves, will have their own way, and do their own will; but let them know that God will be exalted; he will glorify his own name; and wherein they deal proudly, he will be above them, and make them know that he is so.

Because men cannot understand what is their duty, or what they are doing so long as their passions are unbridled, and their minds tumultuous, busied, and distracted about many things, it is good for them from time to time to gather in their straying thoughts, to silence their passions and perturbations, and humbly to compose themselves to observe what God requires of them.—(18.)

Let his own people be still; let them be calm, and know, to their comfort, that the Lord is God, he is God alone, and will be exalted above the heathen; let him alone to fulfil his own counsels in the world. Though depressed, yet let us not be dejected; we are sure that God will be exalted, and that may satisfy us; he will work for his great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. When we pray, Father, glorify thy name,

we ought to act faith upon the answer given to that prayer, when Christ himself prayed it; I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again.

He does and will do great things for his people's safety and protection, ver. 11. Let all believers triumph in this. They have the presence of a God of power, of all power. Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them, if the Lord of hosts be with us. They are under the protection of a God who not only is able to help them, but is engaged to help them. He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people; nay, and of all praying people, the spiritual seed of wrestling Jacob. He is our Refuge, by whom we are sheltered, and in whom we are satisfied; who by his providence secures our welfare, when without are fightings, and who by his grace quiets our minds, and establishes them, when within are fears. The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, has been, is, and will be with us; has been, is, and will be our Refuge: the original includes all; and well may Selah be added to it. Mark this, and take the comfort of it, and say, If God be for us, who can be against us? Through life and in death let us answer every fear with, The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.

PSALM XLVII.

The scope of this psalm is to excite all people to praise God. We are directed in what manner to do it, publicly, cheerfully, and intelligently, ver. 1. 6, 7. We are furnished with matter for praise. God's majesty, ver. 2. His sovereign and universal dominion, ver. 2. 7—9. The great things he had done, and will do for his people, ver. 3—5. Many suppose that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the bringing up of the ark to mount Zion; but it looks further, to the ascension of Christ into the heavenly Zion, after he had finished his undertaking on earth; and to the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

Ver. 1—4. The psalmist, having his own heart filled with great and good thoughts of God, endeavours to engage all about him in the blessed work of praise; as one convinced that God is worthy of all blessing and praise, and as one grieved at his own and others' backwardness to this work.

Observe what is suggested to us as matter for our praise. That the God with whom we have to do is a God of awful majesty. The universal and absolute sovereignty of a holy God would be most terrible were it not exercised by his Son from a mercy seat; but now it is only terrible to the workers of iniquity. The victories of Israel were but shadows of the spiritual triumph of the church. While his people express their confidence and joy, and animate each other in serving him, let sinners submit to his authority, and accept his salvation.

He takes a particular care of his people and their concerns, has done so, and ever will. This looks forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be set over all the earth, and not confined to the Jewish nation. Jesus Christ shall subdue the Gentiles; he shall bring them in as sheep into the fold, so the word signifies, not for slaughter, but for preservation. He shall subdue their affections, and make them a willing people in the day of his power; shall bring their thoughts into obedience to him, and bring back those who had gone astray, under the guidance of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, 1 Pet. 2. 25.

Also it speaks of his giving them rest and settlement, ver. 4. Apply this spiritually, and it shows, 1. The happiness of the saints, that God himself has chosen their inheritance for them, and it is a goodly heritage: he has chosen it, who knows the soul, and what will serve to make it happy; he himself has undertaken to be the Inheritance of his people, 16. 5, and he has laid up for them in the other world an inheritance incorruptible, 1 Pet. 1. 4. 2. The faith and submission of the saints to God. This is the language of every gracious soul, God shall choose my inheritance for me; let him appoint me my lot, and I will acquiesce in the appointment. He knows what is good for me better than I do for myself, and therefore I have no will of my own but what is resolved into his. Let us confide in his wisdom, submit to his will, and be thankful for his distinguishing mercy.

Ver. 5—9. We are here most earnestly pressed to praise God; we have need to be urged to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line. This intimates that it is a very necessary and excellent duty, that it is a duty we ought to be frequent

and abundant in. Should not a people praise their God? Dan. 5. 4. Should not subjects praise their king? God is our God, our King, and therefore we must praise him, sing his praises, as those that are pleased with them, and that are not ashamed of them. But here is a needful rule, ver. 7; Sing ye praises with understanding. As those that do yourselves understand why and for what reasons you praise God, and what is the meaning of the service. This is the gospel rule, 1 Cor. 14. 15, To sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also; it is only with the heart that we make melody to the Lord, Eph. 5. 19. It is not an acceptable service, if it be not a reasonable service. And as those that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise him.

We must praise God going up, ver. 5, which may refer, 1. To the carrying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity. The emerging of God's ordinances out of obscurity, in order to the more public and solemn administration of them, is a great favour to any people, which they have reason to rejoice in, and give thanks for. 2. To the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven, when he had finished his work on earth, Acts 1. 9. Then God went up with the shout of a king, of a conqueror, as one who, having spoiled principalities and powers, then led captivity captive, 68. 18. He went up as Mediator, typified by the ark, and the mercy-seat over it, and was brought as the ark was, into the most holy place, into heaven itself: see Heb. 9. 24. He shall come again in the same manner as he went, Acts 1. 11.

We must praise God reigning, ver. 7, 8, over all the kings of the earth. Now this may be understood, 1. Of the kingdom of providence. See here the extent of God's government; even the heathen that serve other gods, are ruled by the true God, whether they will or not. See the equity of his government; it is a throne of holiness on which he sits. 2. Of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus Christ, who is God, and whose throne is forever and ever, reigns over the heathen; not only is he intrusted with the administration of the kingdom of providence, but he shall set up the kingdom of his grace in the Gentile world, and rule in the hearts of multitudes, Eph. ii. 12, 13. This the apostle speaks of as a great mys-

tery, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, Eph. 3. 6. Christ sits upon the throne of his holiness, his throne in the heavens, where all the administrations of his government are to show and advance holiness among the children of men.

We must praise God as attended and honoured by the princes of the people, ver. 9. This may be understood of the states of Israel, the heads and rulers of the several tribes. It was their happiness that they had a settled government, princes of their people, who were the shields of their land. It was well with Israel when the princes of their people were gathered together to consult for the public welfare. The unanimous agreement of the great ones of a nation in the things that belong to its peace, promises abundance of blessings. The volunteers of the people, so it may be read; it is the same word that is used, 110. 3, Thy people shall be willing; for those that are gathered to Christ are not forced, but made freely willing to be his. It may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, and taken as a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah the kings of the earth and their people should join themselves to the church, and bring their glory and power into the New Jerusalem; that they should all become the people of the God of Abraham.

Then shall there be but one fold under one Shepherd. The numerous tribes of outcast heathen shall flock to the standard of Messiah's cross; the scattered and degraded posterity of Abraham shall bethink themselves and live; the church, happy and arrayed in millennial splendour and beauty, shall reflect the honour and proclaim the praises of him who hath covered her with the robe of righteousness, and who hath decked her in the garments of salvation.—(47.)

We are never suffered to forget the end of Messiah's exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; so continually do the prophets and apostles delight to dwell upon the conversion of the nations to the gospel of Christ. Why do we vainly fancy that we belong to him, unless his Spirit reign in our hearts by faith?—(32.)

Lord, is it not thy glory and delight to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins, now that thou art exalted as a Prince and a Saviour? Lord, do thou rule in us, and rule for us. Grant us,

and all thy church, all the blessings of thy kingdom of grace here, and glory hereafter. Set up thy kingdom in our hearts. Bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. And so sweetly constrain all the powers and faculties of the souls of thy redeemed, into holy love, fear, and delight in thee, that praises with understanding may go forth from every heart, both here and for ever, to Thee, the God of our salvation.—(37.)

PSALM XLVIII.

This psalm, as the two former, is a triumphant song; it might be penned upon occasion of some eminent victory, yet it is applicable to the glories of the gospel church, of which Jerusalem was a type. Jerusalem is praised, (1.) For its relation to God, ver. 1, 2. For God's care of it, ver. 3. For the terror it strikes on its enemies, ver. 4—7. (2.) For the pleasure it gives its friends. They delight to think of what God has done, does, and will do for it, ver. 8. Of the gracious discoveries he makes of himself, in and for that holy city, ver. 9, 10. Of the effectual provision which is made for its safety, ver. 11—13. Of the assurance we have of the perpetuity of God's covenant with the children of Zion, ver. 14.

Ver. 1—7. The psalmist designs to praise Jerusalem, and to set forth the grandeur of that city. He begins with the praises of God, and his greatness, ver. 1, and ends with the praises of God, and his goodness, ver. 14; for whatever is the subject of our praises, God must be both the Alpha and Omega of them.

Jerusalem is the city of our God; it is the city of the great King, who has chosen it for the special residence of his grace, as heaven is of his glory; but none on earth render him due honour except the citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem, who worship him in the mountain of his holiness as their God and Saviour.

It is enlightened with the knowledge of God. In Judah God is known, and his name is great. Happy the kingdom, the city, the family, the heart in which God is great, in which he is all. There God is known, ver. 3; and where he is known, he will be great: none condemn God but those that are ignorant of him.

It is devoted to the honour of God. This is the privilege of the church of

Christ; that it is a holy nation, a peculiar people; Jerusalem, the type of it, is called the holy city.

It is the place appointed for the solemn service and worship of God. The clearer discoveries are made to us of God and his greatness, the more it is expected that we should abound in his praises. Herein Jerusalem typified the gospel church; for what little tribute of praise God has from this earth, arises from that church.

It is taken under his special protection, ver. 3. God was known, not only in the streets, but even in the palaces of Jerusalem, for a Refuge; the great men had recourse to God.

Upon all these accounts Jerusalem, and especially mount Zion, on which the temple was built, were universally admired; Beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth, ver. 2. This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground, which was thus beautified with holiness, be called the joy of the whole earth, that which the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, that God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth.

The kings of the earth were afraid of it. That God was known in their palaces for a Refuge they had a late instance, and a very remarkable one, whatever it was. When the neighbouring princes had gathered against it, God impressed such terrors on their minds, as made them retire with precipitation. The defeat hereby given to their designs upon Jerusalem is compared to the dreadful effects upon a fleet of ships by a violent storm, ver. 7.

Nor can any thing in nature more fitly represent the overthrow of heathenism by the Spirit of the gospel, than the wreck of a fleet in a violent storm. Both are effected by the mighty power of God.—(32.)

2. The temple occupied great part of mount Zion, upon the north of Jerusalem.

7. The east wind is particularly tempestuous and dangerous to navigators in the Mediterranean sea.

Ver. 8—14. We have here the improvement which the people of God are taught to make of his glorious and gracious appearances for them.

1. Let our faith in the word of God be hereby confirmed. If we compare what God has done with what he has spoken, we shall find, that as we have heard, so have we seen, ver. 8; and what we have

seen, obliges us to believe what we have heard. In the great things that God has done, and is doing for his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilment of the scriptures; and this would help us the better to understand both the providence itself, and the scripture fulfilled in it.

2. Let our hope of the stability and perpetuity of the church be hereby encouraged. This was not fulfilled in Jerusalem, but has its accomplishment in the gospel church; we are sure that shall be established for ever; it is built upon a Rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, Matt. 16. 18. God himself has undertaken the establishment of it; the Lord has founded Zion, Isa. 14. 32.

3. Let our minds be hereby filled with good thoughts of God, ver. 9. All the streams of mercy that flow down to us, must be traced to the fountain of God's loving kindness. It is not owing to any merit of ours, but purely to his mercy, and the peculiar favour he bears to his people. What subject can we dwell upon more noble, more pleasant, more profitable? We must have God's loving kindness always before our eyes, 26. 3, especially when we enjoy public ordinances.

4. Let us give to God the glory of the great things which he has done for us, and mention them to his honour, ver. 10. By the late signal deliverance of Jerusalem, God had gloriously discovered his wisdom, power, and goodness, and made all the neighbouring nations sensible of it. But his people must, in a special manner, acknowledge his justice in all he does for them.

5. Let all the members of the church take to themselves the comfort of what God does for his church, ver. 11. When we have given God the praise, we may then take the pleasure of the extraordinary deliverances of the church, and be glad because of God's judgments, the operations of his providence, all which we may see wrought in wisdom, and working for the good of his church.

6. Let us diligently observe the instances and evidences of the church's beauty, strength, and safety, and faithfully transmit our observations to those that shall come after us, ver. 12, 13. Let them observe, with wonder, that the towers and bulwarks are all in full strength. They might fortify themselves against the fear of the like danger another time. Or, Set your heart to her bulwarks. This

intimates that the principal bulwarks of Zion were, not the objects of sense, which they might set their eyes upon, but the objects of faith, which they must set their hearts upon. It was well fortified both by nature and art; but its bulwarks that were mostly to be relied upon, were the special presence of God in it, the beauty of holiness he had put upon it, and the promises he had made concerning it. Consider Jerusalem's strength, and tell it to the generations to come, that they may do nothing to weaken it, and that if at any time it be in distress, they may not basely surrender it. Calvin observes, that when they are directed to transmit to posterity a particular account of the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces of Jerusalem, it is intimated that in time they would all be destroyed. When the disciples were admiring the buildings of the temple, their Master told them that in a little time one stone of it should not be left upon another, Matt. 24. 1, 2. Therefore this must certainly be applied to the gospel church, that mount Zion, Heb. 12. 22. Consider its towers, bulwarks, and palaces, that you may be encouraged to join yourselves to it. See it founded on Christ, the Rock fortified by the Divine power, guarded by him that neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces, what precious promises are its bulwarks; tell this to the generation following, that they may with purpose of heart espouse its interests, and cleave to it.

Salvation by Christ, his righteousness, sacrifice, and satisfaction, God has appointed for walls and bulwarks, and they make the city and church impregnable, Isa. 26. 1. Likewise the Spirit of God, his operations and influences, which are a standard against the enemy's opposition and persecution, who, being in his church and people, is greater than he that is in the world, Isa. 59. 19; 1 John 4. 4. Some render the words, Set your hearts on her strength, that is, on Christ, who is the strength of the poor and needy in their distress; the strength of their hearts, of their lives, and of their salvation, and the security of the church.—(27.)

7. Let us triumph in God, and in the assurances we have of his everlasting loving-kindness, ver. 14. Let us meditate upon the precious promises made to every true believer, and the privileges enjoyed by them. While we are thereby encour-

raged to trust in the Lord, and to serve him in dangers and difficulties, let us point them out to our children, and to the young around us. This God, who has now done such great things for us, is our God for ever and ever; he is constant and unchangeable in his love to us, and his care for us. If God be our God, he is ours for ever, not only through all the ages of time, but to eternity; for it is the everlasting blessedness of glorified saints, that God himself will be with them, and will be their God, Rev. 21. 3. If he be our God, he will be our faithful, constant Guide, to show us our way, and to lead us in it; he will be so, even unto death, which will be the end of our way, and will bring us to our rest. He will lead and keep us, even to the last. He will be our Guide above death; so some. He will so guide us, as to set us above the reach of death, so that it shall not be able to do us any real hurt. He will be our Guide beyond death; so others. He will conduct us to happiness on the other side death, to a life in which there shall be no more death. If we take the Lord for our God, he will conduct and convey us safe to death, through death, and beyond death; down to death, and up to glory.

11. "The daughters of Judah" probably denotes the cities and people of that tribe.

PSALM XLIX.

The scope and design of this psalm is, to convince men of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the things of this world, and so to persuade them to seek the things of a better world; also to comfort the people of God, in reference to their own troubles, and the grief that arises from the prosperity of the wicked. (1.) The psalmist proposes to awaken worldly people out of their security, ver. 1—3, and to comfort himself and other godly people in a day of distress, ver. 4, 5. (2.) He endeavours to convince sinners of their folly in doting upon the wealth of this world, by showing them that they cannot, with all their wealth, save their friends from death, ver. 6—9. They cannot save themselves from death, ver. 10. They cannot secure to themselves a happiness in this world, ver. 11, 12. Much less can they secure to themselves a happiness in the other world, ver. 14. (3.) He endeavours to comfort himself and other good people against the fear, of

death, ver. 15. Against the fear of the prosperous power of wicked people, ver. 16—20. Let us receive these instructions, and contrast the prosperous sinner with the true believer, especially with reference to death and the resurrection.

Ver. 1—5. We seldom meet with a more solemn introduction; there is no truth of more undoubted certainty, or of greater importance.

The psalmist demands attention from the whole human race to a message unto them from the Lord. The truths which relate to the eternal states of the righteous and the wicked are equally important to all the inhabitants of the earth. Blessed be God, they are plainly proposed to us in his holy word.

Let all hear this with application. Let those that are high and rich in the world, hear of the vanity of their worldly possessions, and not be proud of them, nor secure in the enjoyment of them; let those that are poor and low hear this, and be content with their little, and not envy those that have abundance. The poor are as much in danger from inordinate desire toward the wealth of the world, as rich people from inordinate delight in it.

His mouth spake of wisdom, ver. 3. At the call of folly multitudes are always ready to assemble; but Wisdom, eternal Wisdom, crieth without; she lifteth up her voice in the streets, Prov. 1. 20; but who attends to her heavenly instruction? The mouth of Jesus always spake wisdom, but few regarded him; the meditation of his heart was ever of understanding, but it was accounted madness.—(32.)

What the psalmist's mouth spake, was the meditation of his heart; it was what God put into his mind, what he had himself seriously considered. That which ministers speak from their own hearts, is most likely to reach the hearts of their hearers.

He declares his purpose to apply himself closely to his subject, and to open his dark and perplexing subject upon the harp. The passage at large contains the language of one who is not only deeply engaged in pondering his own thoughts, but who is also listening with deep attention to the dictates of the Holy Spirit, and who is ready to proclaim for the benefit of others what is given to himself, as he bows his ear with reverence to the Divine voice.—(47.)

He begins with the application of it to

himself, and that is the right method in which to treat of Divine things. We must first preach to ourselves, before we undertake to admonish or instruct others. Before he comes to set down the folly of carnal security, he lays down, ver. 5, from his own experience, the benefit and comfort of a holy, gracious security, which they enjoy, who trust in God, and not in their worldly wealth. Wherefore should I be afraid of them? Wherefore should I fear in the days of trouble and persecution, when my supplanters shall surround me with mischievous attempts? In the day of judgment, the iniquity of our heels, or of our steps, our past sins, will compass us, will be set in order before us. Every work will be brought into judgment, with every secret thing; and every one of us must give account of himself. In these days, worldly, wicked people will be afraid; but wherefore should a good man fear death, who has God with him? When his iniquities compass him about, he sees them all pardoned, his conscience is purified and pacified, and even in the judgment-day, when the hearts of others fail them for fear, such can lift up their heads with joy, Luke 21. 26, 28. Note; The children of God, though ever so poor, are, in this, truly happy, above the most prosperous of the children of this world, that they are well guarded against the terrors of death, and the judgment to come.

5. The wickedness of those that lie in wait for me, that endeavour to supplant me.—*Lowth.*

Ver. 6—14. In these verses we have a description of the spirit and way of worldly people. God often gives abundance of the good things of this world to men who live in contempt of him, and rebellion against him; by which it appears that they are not the best things in themselves. It is true, that a man may have the wealth of this world, and may thereby have his heart enlarged in love, and thankfulness, and obedience, and may do that good with it, which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not men's having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and so these worldly people are here described.

They trust in their wealth, ver. 6; they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil, and supply them with all good, and think that they need nothing else,

no, not God himself. Their gold is their hope, Job 31. 24, and so it becomes their God. Thus our Saviour explains the difficulty of the salvation of rich people, Mark 10. 24; How hard is it for them, that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! see 1 Tim. 6. 17.

They take pride in their riches, as if they were sure tokens of God's favour, and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry, as if they made them truly great and happy, and more really excellent than their neighbours. Therefore they call their lands after their own names, hoping thereby to perpetuate their memory. If their lands do retain the names by which they called them, it is but a poor honour; but they often change names when they change their owners.

They flatter themselves with an expectation of the continuance of their worldly possessions, ver. 11, and with this thought they please themselves. Are not all thoughts inward? Yes; but it intimates that this thought is deeply rooted in their minds, is revolved there, and carefully lodged in the innermost recesses of their hearts. A godly man has thoughts of the world, but they are his outward thoughts; his inward thought is reserved for God and heavenly things: but a worldly man has only some floating thoughts of the things of God, while his fixed thought, his inward thought, is about the world; that lies nearest the heart, and is upon the throne there.

See the demonstration of their folly herein, ver. 13; This their way is their folly. The way of worldliness is a very foolish way. God pronounced him a fool, who thought his goods were laid up for many years, and that they would be a portion for his soul, Luke 12. 19, 20. Yet their posterity agree with them in the same sentiments. The love of the world is a natural disease; men have it by nature, till the grace of God cures it.

To prove the folly of carnal worldlings, the psalmist shows that with all their wealth they cannot save the life of the dearest friend they have in the world, ver. 7—9; nor will one man's estate be the ransom of another man's life. We cannot bribe death, that our brother should still live, much less that he should live for ever, in this world; nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption; for we must needs die, and return to the dust. It is certainly true, that the redemption of

the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever; life, when it is going, cannot be stopped, and when it is gone, it cannot be recalled, by any human art, or worldly price. But this looks further, to the eternal redemption which was to be wrought out by the Messiah, whom the Old Testament saints had looked to as the Redeemer. Immortality is a jewel of too great a value to be purchased by the wealth of this world. We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. Hammond applies the 8th and 9th verses expressly to Christ; "The redemption of the soul shall be precious, shall be high-priced, it shall cost very dear; but, being once wrought, it shall cease for ever, it shall never need to be repeated, Heb. 9: 25, 26; 10. 12. And he, the Redeemer, shall yet live for ever, and shall not see corruption; he shall rise again before he sees corruption, and then shall live for evermore," Rev. 1. 18. Christ did that for us, which all the riches of the world could not do; well therefore may He be dearer to us than any worldly thing. Christ did that for us, which a brother, a friend could not do for us, no not one of the best estate or interest; and therefore those that love father or brother more than him, are not worthy of him. This likewise shows the folly of worldly people, who sell their souls for that which will never buy them.

With all their wealth they cannot secure themselves from the stroke of death. The worldling sees that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, ver. 10. Therefore he cannot but expect that it will, at length, come to his own turn. He foolishly comforts himself with this, that though he shall not continue, his house shall. Thus foolish are the thoughts and ways of ungodly men. Yet one generation after another applauds their maxims; and the character of a fool, as drawn by heavenly Wisdom itself, Luke 12. 16—21, continues to be a model for imitation, even among professed christians!

And as men's wealth will stand them in no stead in a dying hour, so neither will their honour, ver. 12. Man at his best estate, surrounded and supported with all the advantages he can desire, abides not; his honour is a fleeting shadow. He carries not all night; this world is an inn, in which his stay is so short, that he can scarcely be said to have a night's lodging; so little rest is there in these

things. He is like the beasts that perish; he must as certainly die as the beasts, and his death will be as final a period to his state in this world as theirs is. And frequently the greatest honours and wealth, unjustly gotten by the parent, descend not to any one of his posterity; as the beasts, when they die, leave nothing behind them to their young ones.

Their condition on the other side death will be very miserable. The world they dote upon not only will not save them from death, but will sink them so much the lower into hell, ver. 14. Their prosperity did but feed them like sheep for the slaughter, Hos. 4. 16. Their own guilty consciences, like so many vultures, shall be continually preying upon them, Luke 16. 25. Death insults and triumphs over them. While a saint can ask proud Death, Where is thy sting? Death will ask the proud sinner, Where is thy wealth, thy pomp? And in the morning of the resurrection, when all that sleep in the dust, shall awake, Dan. 12. 2, the upright shall have dominion over them; shall be advanced to the highest dignity and honour, when they are filled with everlasting shame and contempt, elevated to the highest heavens, when they are sunk to the lowest hell. Let us not judge of things, as they will appear at the day. But what will become of all the beauty of the wicked? Alas! that shall all be consumed in the grave from their dwelling; all that upon which they valued themselves, and for which others caressed and admired them, was all borrowed, and they will rise in their own native deformity. The beauty of holiness is that which the grave, that consumes all other beauty, cannot touch, or do any damage to. Their beauty shall consume, the grave, or hell, being a habitation to every one of them; and what beauty can be there where there is nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever?

11. In the first clause of this verse some suppose a letter has been changed, and they render it, "Their grave is their house for ever." The latter clause *Mudge* renders, "They put their names upon heaps of earth." He considers it to refer to monumental inscriptions. There is nothing left but their names inscribed upon heaps of perishable earth.

14. "Death is their shepherd. And the upright in the time of judgment shall have dominion over them." This verse is one of the most difficult in the Hebrew scriptures.—*Boothroyd*.

Ver. 15.—20. Believers should not be

afraid of death. There is no cause for that fear, if they have a prospect of a happy state on the other side death, ver. 15.

The distinction of men's outward condition, how great soever in life, makes none at death; rich and poor meet in the grave: but the distinction of men's spiritual state, though in this life it makes a small difference, yet, at and after death, it makes a very great one. The righteous has hope in his death, so has the psalmist hope in God concerning his soul. The believing hopes of the soul's redemption from the grave, and reception to glory, are the great support and joy of the children of God in a dying hour.

They hope that God will redeem their souls from the power of the grave. The grave has a power over the body by God's sentence, Gen. 3. 19, but it has no such power over the soul; it has power to silence, and imprison, and consume the body; but the soul then moves, and acts, and converses more freely than ever, Rev. 6. 9, 10; it is immaterial and immortal. The soul is often put for the life; that indeed falls under the power of the grave for a time, but it shall, at length, be redeemed from it, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The God of life, who was its Creator at first, can and will be its Redeemer at last. It includes the salvation of the soul from eternal ruin; God shall redeem my soul from the *sheol* of hell, the wrath to come, that pit of destruction into which the wicked shall be cast, ver. 14. It is a great comfort to dying saints, that they shall not be hurt of the second death, Rev. 2. 41; therefore the first death has nothing, and the grave no victory.

God will receive them to himself. He redeems their souls, that he may receive them, 31. 5; Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it. Had it not been for the ransom of the death of Christ, who arose to immortality, and saw no corruption, the body of every sinner must have been left in the grave, and his soul in hell; for the redemption was too precious to be otherwise effected, and must therefore have been let alone for ever.

Believers should not be afraid of the prosperity and power of wicked people in this world. The psalmist supposes they will be under strong temptation to envy the prosperity of sinners, and to fear that they will be found the truly happy people. But it is of great consequence to consider what

that is, in which we bless our souls, upon which we think well of ourselves. Believers bless themselves in the God of truth, Isa. 65. 16, and think themselves happy if he is theirs; carnal people bless themselves in the wealth of the world, and think themselves happy if they have abundance of that.

Men will praise thee, and cry thee up, as having done well for thyself in raising such an estate and family, ver. 18. This is the opinion of all the children of this world, that those do best for themselves who heap up riches, though, at the same time, nothing is done for the soul, nothing for eternity; and accordingly they bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhors, 10. 3. But what will it avail us to be approved of men, if God condemn us?

He suggests that which is sufficient to take off the strength of the temptation, by directing us to look forward to the end of prosperous sinners, 73. 17. Those have something to show in the other world for their living in this, who, through grace, though they came corrupt, and sinful, and spiritually naked into it, go renewed, sanctified, and well-clothed with the righteousness of Christ, out of it. They that are rich in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, have something which they shall carry away with them, something which death cannot strip them of, nay, which death will improve; but as for worldly possessions, as we brought nothing into the world, so it is certain that we shall carry nothing out, but leave it to others, 1 Tim. 6. 7. They shall descend, but their glory, that which they called and counted their glory, and gloried in, shall not bring them off in the judgment, or abate the torments of hell; grace is glory that will ascend with us, but no earthly glory will descend after us. When the believer dieth, his soul, redeemed by the Saviour's blood, is received to glory; the life of his body also shall be restored, redeemed from the power of the grave, rendered incorruptible and glorious.

In the other world, the wicked shall go to the generation of his fathers, his worldly-wicked fathers, whose steps he trod in, who would not hearken to the word of God, Zech. 1. 4. He shall go to be there where they are, that shall never see light, shall never have the least glimpse of comfort and joy, being condemned to utter darkness. Be not afraid then of the pomp and power of wicked

people; for the end of the man that is in honour, if he be not wise and good, will be miserable; if he understand not, he is to be pitied rather than envied.

The sum of the whole matter is—that it can profit a man nothing to gain the whole world; to become possessed of all its wealth and all its power; if after all he lose his own soul, and be cast away for want of that holy and heavenly wisdom which distinguishes man from the brutes, and sets them above him, in his life and at his death.—(32.)

And is there a rational creature that can prefer the lot of the rich sinner to that of poor Lazarus, in life and death, and to eternity? And is this more than brutish stupidity universal to the human race if left to themselves? Assuredly it is. What need then we have of revelation and of the teaching of the Holy Ghost; when with all our boasted powers we are prone to such infatuation in the most important of all concerns! Lord deliver us from the love of the world, and teach us to set our affections on things above.

PSALM L.

This psalm is a psalm of instruction. It predicts the coming of Christ, and the day of judgment, in which God will call men to an account concerning their observance of those things which they have thus been taught. Here is, (1.) The glorious appearance of the Prince that gives law and judgment, ver. 1—6. (2.) Instruction given to his worshippers, to turn their sacrifices into prayers, ver. 7—15. (3.) A rebuke to those that pretend to worship God, but live in disobedience to his commands, ver. 16—22; and warning given to all to look to their conversation as well as to their devotions, ver. 23. These instructions and admonitions we must take to ourselves, and give to one another.

Ver. 1—6. The almighty and eternal Jehovah hath spoken to men from mount Sinai, as a Law-giver; and from mount Zion as a Saviour: ere long he will speak to the whole human race from his righteous tribunal.

The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken; El, Elohim, Jehovah, the God of infinite power, justice, and mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God is the Judge, the Son of God came for judgment into the world, and the Holy

Ghost is the Spirit of judgment. All the earth is called to attend, because all the children of men are concerned to know the right way of worshipping God, in spirit and in truth, because when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up, all should be instructed in the evangelical worship, and invited to join in it, see Mal. 1. 11; Acts 10. 34, and because in the day of final judgment, all nations shall be gathered together, to receive their doom, and every man shall give account of himself to God.

Zion is here called the perfection of beauty, because it was the holy hill; and holiness is indeed the perfection of beauty. He shall come, and not keep silence at the sins of men, as he had done, but shall show his displeasure, and shall also cause that mystery to be published to the world by his holy apostles, which had long lain hid, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph. 3. 5, 6, and that the partition-wall of the ceremonial law should be taken down. In the great day, our God shall come, and shall not keep silence, but shall make those to hear his judgment that would not hearken to his law.

That solemn season will be to sinners a day of wrath, and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, while heaven and earth shall approve the righteous sentence; but those who have been favoured with the blessed gospel, in which the beauty and glory of all the Divine perfections shine forth from Christ Jesus, and who have neglected or abused it, will hear the most tremendous doom. Happy they who are saints indeed, who have come into the covenant of grace by faith in the Redeemer's atoning sacrifice, and who have shown the sincerity of their love by fruits of righteousness.

When God will reject the services of those who only offered sacrifice, resting in the outside of the performance, he will graciously accept those who, in sacrificing, attend to, and answer the end of the institution of sacrifices. The design of preaching the gospel, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom, was, to gather together in one the children of God, John 11. 52. And, at the second coming of Jesus Christ, all his saints shall be gathered together unto him, 2 Thess. 2. 1, to be with him in the judgment; for the saints shall judge the world. It is only by sacrifice, by Christ the great Sacrifice, from whom the sacrifices of the law derived what value they had, that we poor sinners can covenant

with God, so as to be accepted of him. There must be an atonement made for the breach of the first covenant, before we can be admitted again into covenant.

True and righteous are his judgments, Rev. 19. 1, 2. The righteousness of God in all the rebukes of his word and providence, in the establishment of his gospel, which brings in an everlasting righteousness, and in which the righteousness of God is revealed, and especially in the judgment of the great day, is what the heavens will declare. Even sinners' own consciences will subscribe to it, and hell as well as heaven will be forced to acknowledge the righteousness of God.

Ver. 7—15. God had a controversy with the Jews; but what was the ground of the controversy? Not their neglect of the ceremonial institutions; they took a pride in them, and hoped their constant sacrifices would both expiate and excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law; but God here shows them the contrary. God could not be benefited by their sacrifices. Their goodness could not possibly extend unto him, nor, if they were in this matter righteous, was he the better, ver. 13. To obey is better than sacrifice, and to love God and our neighbour, better than all burnt-offerings; so much better, that God by his prophets often told them that their sacrifices were not only not acceptable, but abominable to him, while they lived in sin: see Prov. 15. 8; Isa. 1. 11, &c.; 66. 3; Jer. 6. 20; Amos 5. 21. They are therefore here warned not to rest in these performances.

Let us beware of resting in any form. Even Divine truths and institutions may be held and attended upon in unrighteousness. God demands the heart, and will not be put off with unmeaning outward observances. How can human inventions please him, when repentance, faith, and holiness are neglected? As the Jews and their costly oblations were abhorred, when they rejected Him of whom Moses and the prophets had written, so will new testament ordinances, and even outward moral obedience be rejected, if substituted in his place: no spiritual services can be performed except by faith in him, and the supply of his Spirit.

This may also be considered as looking forward to the abolishing of the ceremonials of the law by the gospel of Christ. When God shall set up the kingdom of

the Messiah, he shall abolish the old way of worship by sacrifice and offerings; he will no more have those to be continually before him, ver. 8. For indeed he never appointed this, as that which he had any need of, or took any pleasure in; he has far more beasts in the forest, and upon the mountains, which we know nothing of, nor have any property in, than we have in our folds; but he instituted it, to prefigure the great sacrifice which his own Son should, in the fulness of time, offer upon the cross, to make atonement for sin, and all the other spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, with which God, through Christ, will be well pleased.

He directs to the best sacrifices of prayer and praise, as those which, under the law, were preferred before all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. On which even then the greatest stress was laid, and which now, under the gospel, come in the room of those carnal ordinances that were imposed until the times of reformation. He shows us here, ver. 14, 15, what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, and will accept, when sacrifices are slighted and superseded. A broken and contrite heart is the sacrifice which God will not despise, 51. 17. If the sin was not abandoned, the sin-offering was not accepted. We must give God thanks for his mercies to us; every day, often every day; and this shall please the Lord, if it come from an humble thankful heart, full of love to him, and joy in him, better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs, 69. 30, 31. We must make conscience of performing our covenants with him, Forsake thy sins, and do thy duty pursuant to the solemn promises thou hast made. When we give God thanks for any mercy we have received, we must pay the vows we made when we were in the pursuit of the mercy, else our thanksgivings will not be accepted. In the day of distress, we must apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, ver. 15. Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, and not drive us from him. We must thus acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon his wisdom, power, and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to him, and so give him glory. When he, in answer to our prayers, delivers us, as he has promised to do in such way and time as he shall think fit, we must glorify him by living to his praise.

Thus must we keep up communion with God; meeting him with prayers under trials, and with praises in deliverances.

A believing supplicant shall not only be graciously answered as to his petition, and so have cause of praising God; but also shall have grace to praise God—Thou shalt glorify me.—(18.)

Ver. 16—23. God, by the psalmist, here directs his speech to the wicked, to hypocrites, whether they professed the Jewish or the christian religion. Hypocrisy is wickedness, which God will judge.

Some think ver. 16 points prophetically at the scribes and pharisees, who were the teachers and leaders of the Jewish church, at the time when the kingdom of the Messiah, and the evangelical way of worship spoken of in the foregoing verses, were to be set up. But it is applicable to all those who are practisers of iniquity, and yet professors of piety, especially if withal they be preachers of it.

It is very possible, and too common, for those who declare God's statutes to others, to live in disobedience to them themselves; and for those who take God's covenant in their mouths, in their hearts to continue their covenant with sin and death; but there is a day coming when they will be thrust out as intruders. How many such professors and teachers of christianity disgrace the present age! How many such scandals are found even amongst those who are zealous for the doctrines of grace! This delusion arises from abuse of God's long-suffering, wilful mistake of his character, and the intention of his gospel.

They are charged with transgressing the laws and precepts of religion, ver. 17—20.

The sins of sinners will be proved upon them, beyond contradiction, in the judgment of the great day. What confusion will impenitent sinners be filled with, when God shall set their sins in order before their eyes! They would not see their sins, but endeavoured to forget them; but the day is coming, when God will set their sins in order, sins of childhood and youth, of riper age, and old age, to their everlasting shame and terror. Let those who have hitherto been forgetful of God, given up to wickedness, or in any way negligent of salvation, consider their urgent danger. He now warns that he may not punish.

Observe the Judge's patience, and the sinner's abuse of that patience; sentence

against thine evil works is not executed speedily. The patience of God is very great. It is the more wonderful, because the sinner makes such an ill use of it; but if they turn not, they shall be made to see their error when it is too late, and that the God they provoke is just, holy, and terrible, not such as themselves.

Fair warning is given of the dreadful doom of hypocrites, ver. 22. They that know God, and yet do not obey him, do certainly forget him. Those that forget God, forget themselves; and it will never be right with them till they consider. Those that will not consider the warnings of God's word, will certainly be torn in pieces by the executions of his wrath. They cannot deliver themselves, nor can any friend they have in the world.

Full instructions are given to all, how to prevent this fearful doom, ver. 23. Man's chief end is to glorify God: whose offers praise, glorifies him; whether he be Jew or Gentile, those spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted from him. We must praise God, sacrifice praise, direct it to God, as every sacrifice was directed; put it into the hands of the priest, our Lord Jesus, who is also the altar; see that it be made by fire, sacred fire, that it be kindled with the flame of holy and devout affection; we must be fervent in spirit, praising the Lord. This he is pleased, in infinite condescension, to interpret as glorifying him. Hereby we give him the glory due to his name, and do what we can to advance his kingdom among men. Let us then thankfully accept God's mercy, and praise him, and, endeavouring to glorify him in word and deed, let us wait for his complete and eternal salvation.

St. Paul, Rom. 2. 28, 29, affords a complete comment upon this psalm. "He is not a Jew that is one outwardly; nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."—*Bp. Horne.*

PSALM LI.

This is the most eminent of the penitential psalms, and most expressive of the cares and desires of a repenting sinner. We must come to the throne of grace as penitents, to confess our sins, and sue for the grace of God; and if therein we would take with us words, we can no where find any more suitable than in this psalm, which is the record of David's re-

pentance for his sin in the matter of Uriah. The psalmist (1.) Prays for mercy, humbly confessing his sins, and lamenting his depravity, ver. 1—6. (2.) He pleads for pardon, returning comfort, renewing and upholding grace, that he may promote the glory of God and the conversion of sinners, ver. 7—15. (3.) He pleads that God is better pleased with a contrite heart than the sacrifices of the law, and prays for the prosperity of Zion, ver. 16—19.

Ver. 1—6. The sin of David is recorded for warning to all, that he who thinketh he standeth, may take heed lest he fall. Being convinced of his sin, he poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, from whom they have backslidden, and who alone can heal their backslidings? He drew up, by Divine inspiration, the workings of his heart toward God, upon this occasion, in a psalm, as a profession of his repentance, which he would have generally known; his sin having been notorious. Those that truly repent of their sins, will not be ashamed to own their repentance. Also to instruct others in their repentance, what to do, and what to say. Being converted himself, he thus strengthens his brethren, Luke 22. 32; see also 1 Tim. 1. 16.

David had not only done much, but suffered much in the cause of God; but he flies to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that only for pardon and peace. The true penitent, though he has formerly been eminently holy and useful, has nothing to plead, except his own misery, and the Lord's abundant mercy. For the more we are enabled to do in God's service, the greater are our obligations; our sins are the more aggravated when committed against knowledge and mercies. No wealth or human power can remove guilt from the conscience, or bind up the broken heart.

Observe his plea, ver. 1, 2. The freeness of thy mercy, according to thy loving-kindness. The fulness of thy mercy. There is in thee abundance of it, a multitude of tender mercies for the forgiveness of many sinners. He begs the pardon of sin. The blood of Christ, sprinkled upon the conscience, blots out the transgression, and, having reconciled us to God, reconciles us to ourselves. Wash my soul from

the guilt and stain of my sin by thy mercy and grace. "Multiply to wash me;" the stain is deep, for I have lain long in the guilt. O wash me much, wash me thoroughly; cleanse me from my sin. Sin defiles, renders us odious in the sight of the holy God, and uneasy to ourselves; it unfits us for communion with God, in grace or glory. The believer longs to have the whole debt of his sins cancelled, and every stain cleansed; he would be thoroughly washed from all his iniquities, till the guilt and defilement of every sin be completely removed; but the hypocrite always has some secret reserve, and would have some favourite lust spared.

David had such a deep sense of his sin, that he was continually thinking of it, with sorrow and shame, ver. 3—5. His contrition for his sin, was not a slight sudden passion, but an abiding grief. He aggravates the sin which he confesses; Against thee, and in thy sight; see Luke 15. 18. His sin was committed against God. His truth we deny by wilful sin; his command we disobey; his promise we distrust; his name we dishonour; with him we deal deceitfully and disingenuously. It speaks deep contrition for his sin, and that it was upon right grounds. He had sinned against others, against his own soul, and body, and family; against his kingdom, and against the church of God; and all this helped to humble him; but these were not sinned against so as God was; and therefore this he lays the most sorrowful accent upon. Also it was committed in God's sight. This should greatly humble us for all our sins; it argues either a disbelief of his omniscience, or a contempt of his justice.

He justifies God in the sentence passed upon him. He owns his sin, and aggravates it, that by his confession he might give honour to God; he owns the Lord is righteous: thus will all true penitents justify God by condemning themselves. The truly penitent will ever trace back the streams of actual sin to the fountain of original depravity, for his deeper humiliation.

He confesses his original corruption, ver. 5. Come, my soul, look unto the rock out of which I was hewn, and thou wilt find I was shapen in iniquity. Had I duly considered this before, I should not have made so bold with the temptation, nor have ventured among the sparks with such tinder in my heart; let me consider it now, not to excuse or extenuate the sin,

but as an aggravation. Every one of us brought into the world a corrupt nature, wretchedly degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude; we have from our birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both. This is what we call original sin, because it is as ancient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, that proneness to evil and backwardness to good, which is the burden of the regenerate, and the ruin of the unregenerate.

He is encouraged, in his repentance, to hope that God would graciously accept of him; for God had made him sincere in his resolutions never to return to folly. Thou desirest truth in the inward part; this God looks to, in a returning sinner, that in his spirit there be no guile, 32. 2. He hoped that God would enable him to make good his resolutions; that in the hidden part, in the new man, which is called the hidden man of the heart, 1 Pet. 3. 4, he would make him to know wisdom, so as to discern and avoid the designs of the tempter. Some read it as a prayer; Lord, in this instance, I have done foolishly; for the future, make me to know wisdom. Where there is truth, God will give wisdom; those who sincerely endeavour to do their duty, shall be taught their duty. When the repenting believer considers the truth in which the Lord delighteth, and the wisdom he teacheth, and how contrary he hath acted to both, he will be the more ashamed, and the more led to expect every thing good from Divine grace overcoming his corrupt nature.

Ver. 7—15. David prays that God would cleanse him from his sins, and the defilement he had contracted by them, ver. 7. The expression here alludes to cleansing the leper, or those that were unclean. But it is founded upon gospel grace; Purge me with hyssop, with the blood of Christ applied to my soul by a lively faith, as the water of purification was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop. The blood of Christ is therefore called the blood of sprinkling, Heb. 12. 24; it purges the conscience from dead works, from that guilt of sin, and dread of God, which shut us out of communion with him, as the touch of a dead body, under the law, shut a man out from God's house.

If this blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, cleanse us from our sin, then we shall be clean indeed, Heb. 10. 2. If we be washed in this fountain opened, we shall be whiter than snow; not only acquitted, but accepted; so those are that are justified, Isa. 1. 18; Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.

He prays that, his sins being pardoned, he might have the comfort of that pardon. He asks not to be comforted, till first he is cleansed; but if sin, the bitter root of sorrow, be taken away, he can pray in faith, ver. 8; Let me have a well-grounded peace, of thy creating, so that the bones broken by convictions may rejoice, may be sensibly comforted. Note; 1. The pain of a heart truly broken for sin, may well be compared to that of a broken bone; and it is the same Spirit who, as a Spirit of bondage, smites and wounds, that, as a Spirit of adoption, heals and binds up. 2. The comfort and joy which arise from a pardon sealed to a penitent sinner, are as refreshing as perfect ease from exquisite pain. 3. It is God's work, not only to speak joy and gladness, but to make us hear, and take the comfort of it.

He prays for a complete and effectual pardon. This is that which he is most earnest for, as the foundation of his comfort, ver. 9; Hide thy face from my sins; blot out all mine iniquities out of thy book, blot them out, as a cloud is blotted out and dispelled by the beams of the sun, Isa. 44. 22.

He prays for sanctifying grace; and this every true penitent is as earnest for, as for pardon and peace, ver. 10. The believer desires the renewal to holiness as much as the joy of salvation. He does not pray, Lord, preserve me my reputation, as Saul, 1 Sam. 15. 30. No, his great concern is to get his corrupt nature changed. He now saw, more than ever, what an unclean heart he had, and sadly laments it, but sees it is not in his own power to amend it, and therefore begs of God that he would create in him a clean heart. He only that made the heart, can new make it; and to his power nothing is impossible. It is by the word of his power as the God of grace, that we are clean, John 15. 3, that we are sanctified, John 17. 17. The producing a holy disposition in a sinner's heart, the forming in him a submissive will, a pure imagination, and well-regulated affections, is a new creation.

This state of the understanding and heart is a right spirit, conformable to the image and law of our Creator. It was in man originally, but was lost by the fall, therefore producing it is the renewal of a right spirit. It is begun in regeneration, carried on by progressive sanctification, and completed in glory. When the sinner feels this change is necessary, and reads the promise of God to that purpose, he begins to ask it; and every discovery of his remaining sinfulness leads the believer to renew the supplication more earnestly. Renew a constant spirit within me; so some. He had, in this matter, discovered much inconstancy, and therefore prays, Lord, fix me for the time to come, that I may never, in like manner, depart from thee.

He prays for the continuance of God's good will toward him, and the progress of his good work in him, ver. 11. He does not deprecate the temporal judgments which God had threatened to bring upon him; God's will be done; but, Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath. Let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and all shall be well. And that he might never be deprived of God's grace. He knew he had by his sin grieved the Holy Spirit, and provoked him to withdraw. This he dreads more than any thing; we are undone, if God take his Holy Spirit from us. How exceedingly sinful, how exceedingly miserable was Saul, when the Spirit of the Lord departed from him! David knew it, and therefore begs thus earnestly; Lord, whatever thou take from me, my children, my crown, my life, yet take not thy Holy Spirit from me, see 2 Sam. 7. 15, but continue thy Holy Spirit with me, to perfect the work of my repentance, to prevent my relapse into sin, and to enable me to discharge my duty.

He prays for the restoration of Divine comforts, and the perpetual communications of Divine grace, ver. 12. A child of God knows no true or solid joy but the joy of God's salvation, joy in God his Saviour, and in the hope of eternal life. By wilful sin we forfeit this joy, and deprive ourselves of it; our evidences cannot but be clouded, and our hopes shaken. When we give ourselves so much cause to doubt of our interest in the salvation, how can we expect the joy of it? But they that sow in true repentance, shall reap in the joys of God's salvation, when the times of refreshing shall come. It had made him weak, and therefore he prays,

I am ready to fall, either into sin or into despair; if I be left to myself, I shall certainly sink; therefore uphold me with thy Spirit. Thy Spirit is a free Spirit, a free Agent himself, working freely. A free Spirit will be a firm and fixed Spirit, and will uphold us. The more cheerful we are in our duty, the more constant we shall be to it.

What is this but the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, Gal. 5. 1, which is contrasted with the yoke of bondage? It is the Spirit of adoption, communicated to the heart, the language of which is, Abba, Father. It is a consciousness of that freedom from condemnation, which belongs to those who are in Christ Jesus, and who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, setting the mind free from the law of sin and death; it is the effect of the Spirit witnessing with our spirits, that we are the children of God, Rom. 8. 1, 2, 15, 16. It is the privilege of all penitent believers, though not enjoyed by all; it can be enjoyed by none but penitent believers, though those who are not such, often prefer a claim to it.—(1.)

David had been a transgressor, and therefore could speak experimentally to transgressors, and resolves, ver. 13, having himself found mercy with God in the way of repentance, to teach others who had sinned, to take the same course that he had taken; to humble themselves, to confess their sins, and seek God's face. He also teaches God's way towards us in pardoning mercy; how ready he is to receive those that return to him. By this psalm he is, and will be to the world's end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. The great thing to be aimed at in teaching transgressors, is their conversion to God; happy they that are instrumental to contribute towards it, Jam. 5. 20.

He prays against the guilt of sin, that he might be delivered from that, ver. 14. It concerns us all to pray earnestly against the guilt of blood, and especially the occasioning the ruin of immortal souls by our bad example or neglect. In this prayer he looks to God as the God of salvation. Those to whom God is the God of salvation he will deliver from guilt; for the salvation he is the God of, is salvation from sin. We may therefore plead with him, Lord, thou art the God of my salvation, therefore deliver me from the

dominion of sin. If God would deliver him, his tongue should sing aloud of his righteousness; God should have the glory both of pardoning mercy, and of preventing grace. God's righteousness is often put for his grace, especially in the great business of justification and sanctification. This he would comfort himself in, and this he would endeavour both to acquaint and to affect others with. This all those should do, that have had the benefit of that righteousness.

He prays for the grace of God, and promises to improve that grace to his glory, ver. 15. To them that are tongue-tied by reason of guilt, the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins says effectually, Be opened; and when the lips are opened, what should they speak but the praises of God?

7. The blood of the Lamb, Christ, must be taken, and by the *hyssop* of faith dipped in the basin of gospel ordinances, striking the door-posts of the heart therewith; this done, the destroying angel of God's justice looking upon it, cometh to be satisfied, and hurteth not that soul, and becomes that soul's friend.—*Worden*.

Ver. 16—19. David knew well that the sacrificing of beasts was, in itself, of no account with God, ver. 16. See how glad David would have been to give thousands of rams, to make atonement for sin. Those that are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger by reason of sin, would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it, Mic. 6. 6, 7. But see how little God valued this! As trials of obedience, and types of Christ, he did indeed require sacrifices to be offered; but he had no delight in them for any intrinsic worth or value they had. As they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, otherwise than as expressive of love and duty to him.

He knew also how acceptable true repentance is to God, ver. 17. See here what the good work is that is wrought in every true penitent; a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, necessary humiliation and sorrow for sin. It is a heart breaking with itself, and breaking from its sin; it is a heart pliable to the word of God, and patient under the rod of God; a heart subdued and brought into obedience; it is a heart that is tender, like Josiah's, and trembles at God's word. Oh, that there were such a heart in us! See how graciously God is pleased to accept of this; it is instead of all burnt-offering and sacrifice. Even Divine

ordinances are no more than means of communicating the blessings purchased by the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice was offered upon the altar that sanctified the gift; so the broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ; there is no true repentance without faith in him; and this is the sacrifice which he will not despise. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He despised the sacrifice of torn and broken beasts, but he will not despise that of a torn and broken heart. He will not overlook it, he will not refuse or reject it; though it make God no satisfaction for the wrong done him by sin, yet he does not despise it. More is implied than is expressed; the great God overlooks heaven and earth, to look with favour upon a broken and contrite heart, Isa. 57. 15; 66. 1, 2.

David intercedes for Zion and Jerusalem. Those that have been in spiritual troubles themselves, know how to pity and pray for those that are in like manner afflicted. He was sensible of the wrong he had done to Judah and Jerusalem by his sin; how it had weakened the hands, and saddened the hearts of good people, and opened the mouths of their adversaries; he was likewise afraid lest his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom, and therefore he prays that God would prevent those national judgments which his sin had deserved, that he would continue the blessings, and carry on the good work it had threatened to retard.

No personal fears or troubles of conscience can render the soul which has received grace, indifferent to the interests of the church of God. Humble believers will often fear lest their misconduct should blast their endeavours for doing good; whatever they suffer, or whatever becomes of them, they will desire and pray that true godliness may prevail, and that spiritual sacrifices may abound, through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God, ver. 19.

The sense of God's goodness to them should enlarge the heart in expressions of thankfulness and obedience. O Lord, give us true repentance, for thy mercies' sake. Help us to offer the sacrifice of a contrite spirit; preserve us from hypocrisy and blood guiltiness, particularly the guilt of slaying the souls of others. Help us to walk with increasing watchfulness, and to pray more fervently for our fellow-christians and fellow-sinners.

And, blessed Lord, though our sins plead against us, and Satan is ever ready to accuse, yet thy blood speaketh more for us than all that are against us. Grant our souls the daily, hourly benefit of thy great salvation. Let this be the continued joy of all thy redeemed, that we have redemption through thy blood, the forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of thy grace.—(37.)

18, 19. This had its literal accomplishment when Jerusalem was finished; when the temple was erected on mount Zion; and when the Lord graciously vouchsafed to accept the sacrifices there offered on his altars. It is spiritually true in the christian church, where the substance of all the types and shadows is offered and presented to the Father by the Prince of peace, at the head of the Israel of God. And it will be eternally verified in the kingdom of heaven, where the sacrifices of righteousness and love, of praise and thanksgiving, will never cease to be offered to Him that sitteth on the throne, by the church triumphant in glory.—*Bp. Horne.*

PSALM LII.

(1.) In the person of Doeg the Edomite, who was the persecutor of David, and the murderer of the priests, 1 Sam. 22. are described the enemies of the truth and the church in all ages, ver. 1—4. Their utter destruction from the presence of the Lord is foretold, ver. 5. (2.) The exultation of the righteous over them, ver. 6, 7; these rejoice in their state under grace, in hope of future glory through faith and patience, ver. 8, 9.—(32.)

From this psalm we have assurance of the preservation of God's church and people, in spite of the malicious designs of the children of Satan, that father of lies.

Ver. 1—5. The title is a brief account of the history which the psalm refers to. It is bad to do ill, but it is worse to boast of it, and glory in it, when we have done—not only not to be ashamed of a wicked action, but to justify it; not only to justify it, but to magnify it. They that glory in sin, glory in their shame; and it becomes yet more shameful. The patience and forbearance of God are abused by sinners, to the hardening of their hearts in their wicked ways; because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily. Nay, because God is continually doing them good, therefore they boast as if their prosperity in their wickedness were an evidence that there is no harm in it. This shows the sinfulness of sin, and the folly

of it. The goodness of God endures continually for the preservation of the people of God, and they need not fear what man can do unto them. The enemies in vain boast in their mischief, while we have God's mercy to boast in.

It will not save us from the guilt of lying, to be able to say there was some truth in what we said, if we pervert it, and make it to appear otherwise than it was. The more there is of craft and contrivance in any wickedness, the more there is of the devil in it. Those are of Doeg's spirit, who, instead of being pleased with an opportunity of doing a man a kindness, are glad to do mischief; that is loving evil more than good. It is bad to speak devouring words, but it is worse to love them, either in others or in ourselves.

Destroyers shall be destroyed, ver. 5; those especially that hate, and persecute, and destroy the ministers and people of the Lord. When good men die, they are transplanted from the land of the living, on earth, the nursery of the plants of righteousness, to that in heaven, the garden of the Lord, where they shall take root for ever; but when wicked men die, they are rooted out of the land of the living, to perish for ever; as fuel to the fire of Divine wrath. This will be the portion of those that contend with God.

Those, indeed, have generally been celebrated as heroes, whose conduct has been the reverse of the Divine goodness, who have abused superior advantages and endowments to devising and executing plans of evil. But the believer sees that God will cast down and destroy those who make not him their strength.

Ver. 6—9. God's judgments on the wicked should strike an awe upon the righteous, 119. 120; Rev. 15. 3, 4. We are told how they shall triumph in God's just judgments, ver. 7. Now that which ruined the wicked man's prosperity was, that he did not build it upon a rock; he did not think his prosperity depended upon the favour of God, and therefore took no care to make sure of that favour, nor to keep himself in God's love, made no conscience of his duty to him, nor sought him. Those wretchedly deceive themselves, who think to support themselves in their power and wealth without God and religion. He built upon the sand. He thought his wealth would support itself; He trusted in the abundance of his riches; nay, he

thought his wickedness would help to support it; right or wrong, he would get what he could, and keep what he had, and be the ruin of any one that stood in his way; and this he thought would strengthen him. But see what it comes to; see what untampered mortar he built his house with, now it is fallen, and he himself is buried in the ruins!

Those that by faith and love dwell in the house of God, shall be like green olive-trees there, ver. 8, 9, deriving root from the good Olive, Rom. 11. 17. The olive-tree produces oil, which is useful to man, and was employed in the worship of God, Jud. 9. 9. The righteous man trusts in the everlasting mercy of God, and delights in his ordinances.

That we may be as green olive-trees, we must live a life of faith and holy confidence in God and his grace. His mercy is for ever; it is constant and unchangeable, and will continue to eternity; we must therefore for ever trust in it. It contributes much to the beauty of our profession, and to fruitfulness in every grace, to be much in praising God; and it is certain that we never want matter for praise. We must live in expectation and humble dependence upon God. God's name is good in itself; God's manifestations of himself to his people are gracious and very kind; there is no other name given than his, that can be our refuge and strong tower.

Faith anticipates the day of victory and triumph; in the mean time, while waiting patiently for its coming, she refreshes and comforts herself with frequent meditation on the virtue and power of that saving name, which is as ointment poured forth, Cant. 1. 3, by its fragrance inviting and alluring converts to follow their Redeemer in the way of his commandments.—(32.)

It is very good for us to wait on that name; there is nothing better to calm and quiet our spirits, when they are ruffled and disturbed, and to keep us in the way of duty, when we are tempted to use any indirect courses for our own relief, than to hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord, Lam. 3. 26. All the saints have experienced the benefit of it, who never attended him in vain, never followed his guidance but it ended well, nor were ever made ashamed of their believing expectations from him. However the believer now is afflicted, and thus conformed to the suffering Redeemer, he will wait

on the name of the Lord, and will praise him for ever.

PSALM LIII.

This psalm is almost the same with the 14th. The scope of it is to convince us of our sins. God, by the psalmist, here shows us how bad we are, ver. 1. Proves it upon us by his own certain knowledge, ver. 2, 3. He speaks terror to persecutors, the worst of sinners, ver. 4, 5. He speaks encouragement to God's persecuted people, ver. 6. Some little variation there is between Ps. 14. and this; some expressions there used are here left out, concerning the shame which the wicked put upon God's people, and, instead of that, is here foretold the shame which God would put upon the wicked.

This psalm was opened before, and therefore we shall here only observe some things concerning sin to increase our sorrow for it, and hatred of it.

1. The fact of sin; is that proved? Yes, God is a witness to it; from the place of his holiness he looks on the children of men, and all their sinfulness is open before him, ver. 2.

2. The fault of sin; is there any harm in it? Yes, it is iniquity, ver. 1, 4; it is that which there is no good in, ver. 1, 3; it is an evil thing, it is the worst of evils, it makes this world such an evil world as it is; it is going back from God, ver. 3.

3. The fountain of sin; how comes it that men are so bad? Because there is no fear of God before their eyes. Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they profess to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they deny him.

4. The folly of sin; he is a fool, in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right, that harbours such corrupt thoughts. The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, have no knowledge: those may truly be said to know nothing, that do not know God, ver. 4.

5. The filthiness of sin; sinners are corrupt, ver. 1. It is odious to the holy God, and renders them so. Whatever proud sinners pretend, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest defilement in the world. They who go back from a religious profession, generally become most filthy or most malicious.

6. The fruit of sin; see to what it brings men, when their hearts are hardened

through the deceitfulness of sin. See their contempt of God.

7. The fear and shame that attend sin, ver. 5; There were they in great fear, who had made God their enemy; their own guilty consciences filled them with horror, though otherwise there was no apparent cause of fear. See the ground of this fear. Such will be the fate of those that lay siege to the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, Rev. 20. 9. We need not look upon those enemies with fear, whom God looks on with contempt.

8. The faith of the saints, and their hope and power touching the cure of this great evil, ver. 6. There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. That will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the old testament times who looked and hoped, who prayed and waited for this redemption.

This may be a wish for the first coming of Christ to work out salvation for his people; it may also be expressive of the desire of the church for his coming in a spiritual manner in the latter day, to take to himself his great power, and reign; to destroy antichrist, and deliver his people from bondage and oppression, when the Gentiles shall be gathered in, the Jews converted, and all Israel saved: see Rom. 11. 25, 26.—(27.)

As this psalm points to the natural atheism which is in every man's heart from the consequences of original sin, as the sad cause and source of all our misery, so a deep sense of our guilt and ruin in this particular, may, under God's grace, endear to us the blessed and only recovery which is in the Lord Jesus Christ.—(37.)

God will, in due time, save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which would bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that had long been in a mournful, melancholy state. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church. He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting matter of joy to them. From this work the Redeemer had his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins, Matt. 1. 21.

PSALM LIV.

Here, (1.) David complains to God of the malice of his enemies, and prays for

help against them, ver. 1—3. (2.) He comforts himself with an assurance of the Divine favour and protection, and that his enemies should be confounded, and he delivered, ver. 4—7.

Ver. 1—3. Observe the great distress that David was in, which the title gives an account of. The Ziphims came of their own accord, and informed Saul where David was, with a promise to deliver him into his hand, 1 Sam. 23. 19; 26. 1. One would have thought, when David was retired into his own country, he should not have been betrayed. Never let a good man expect to be safe and easy, till he comes to heaven. It is well that God is faithful, for men are not to be trusted.

He prays to God for succour and deliverance, ver. 1, 2. He appeals to God's strength, by which he was able to help him, and to his name, by which he was engaged to help him. David has no other plea to depend upon than God's name, no other power to depend upon than God's strength, and those he makes his refuge and confidence. This would be the effectual answer of his prayers, ver. 2, which even in his flight, when he had not opportunity for solemn address to God, he lifted up to heaven.

His plea is taken from the character of his enemies, ver. 3. False professors of true religion will generally behave to true believers worse than heathens themselves. They have not set God before them; they have quite cast off the thoughts of God; they do not consider that in fighting against his people, they fight against him, nor have they any dread of the certain fatal consequences of such an unequal engagement. Looking unto David, betrayed by the men of Judah, and to Jesus, betrayed by one of his apostles, what can we expect from any who have not set God before them, save ingratitude, treachery, malice, and cruelty? What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant, will hold those that have broken through the fear of God? Selah; Mark this. Let us set God before us at all times; for if we do not, we are in danger of becoming desperate.

Ver. 4—7. David, by faith, was assured the issue would be comfortable, though the attempt on him was formidable.

Behold, God is mine Helper, ver. 4. If we are for him, he is for us; and if he

is for us, we shall have such help in him, that we need not fear any power engaged against us. Though men and devils aim to be our destroyers, they shall not prevail while God is our Helper; The Lord is with them that uphold my soul: compare 118. 7. Every creature is that to us, and no more, which God makes it to be. God will in due time save his people, and in the mean time sustains them, and bears them up, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

God taking part with David, he doubted not but his enemies should both flee and fall before him, ver. 5. The evil they designed against him, the righteous God will return upon their own heads. This is not a prayer of malice, but a prayer of faith. There is truth in God's threatenings, as well as in his promises; sinners that repent not will find it so to their cost.

He promises to give thanks to God for all the experiences of his goodness, ver. 6. To praise God's name is not only what we are bound to, but it is good, it is pleasant, it is profitable; it is good for us.

He speaks of his deliverance as accomplished, ver. 7. We should, in our greatest straits, encourage ourselves with our past experiences. Or, with this thought he magnified his present deliverance, that it was an earnest of further deliverance. He speaks of the completing of his deliverance as a thing done, though he had as yet many troubles before him; because, having God's promise for it, he was as sure of it as if it was done already. This may point at Christ, of whom David was a type. God would deliver him out of all the troubles of his state of humiliation, and all things are said to be put under his feet; for though we see not yet all things put under him, yet we are sure he shall reign till all his enemies be made his footstool. It is an encouragement to all believers to make that use of their particular deliverances which St. Paul does, 2 Tim. 4. 18, that the Lord would deliver him from every evil work, and preserve him to his heavenly kingdom.

As the risen and ascended Jesus could adopt the psalmist's words, ver. 7, He hath delivered me from all trouble, and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies, so will his risen people at length be enabled to join in them. Lord, help us to bear our cross without repining, and at length bring us to behold and to share thy victories and glory.

Christians never should suffer the voice of praise and thanksgiving to cease in the church of the redeemed. Beautiful and emphatical as these concluding verses appear when taken as proceeding from our Lord upon his resurrection, let us hope and seek that one day we may repeat them on a like occasion.—(32.)

PSALM LV.

It is supposed that David penned this psalm upon occasion of Absalom's rebellion, and that David's troubles were typical of Christ's sufferings. David was in great distress when he penned this psalm.

(1.) He prays that God would manifest his favour to him, and pleads his own sorrow and fear, ver. 1—8. (2.) He prays that God would manifest his displeasure against his enemies, and pleads their great wickedness and treachery, ver. 9—15. (3.) He assures himself that God would, in due time, appear for him against his enemies, comforts himself with the hopes of it, and encourages others to trust in God, ver. 16—23.

Ver. 1—8. In these verses we have,

1. David praying. Prayer is a salve for every sore, and a relief to the spirit under every burden, ver. 1, 2. If in our prayers we sincerely lay open ourselves, our case, our hearts to God, we have reason to hope that he will not hide himself, his favours, his comforts from us.

2. David weeping. In this he was a type of Christ, that he was a man of sorrows, and often in tears, ver. 2. Grievings are sometimes clamorous, and thus, in some measure, are lessened, while those increase that are stifled, and have no vent given them. But what was the matter? ver. 3. It is because of the voice of the enemy, the menaces and insults of Absalom's party. Though they found no iniquity in him, relating to his trust as a king, yet they cast all manner of iniquity upon him, and represented him as a tyrant fit to be expelled. In wrath they hated him; there was in their enmity both the violence of anger, and the implacableness of malice.

3. David in great consternation. We may well suppose him to be so, upon the breaking out of Absalom's conspiracy, and the general defection of the people, even those he had little reason to suspect.

Fearfulness of mind and trembling of

body came upon him, and horror covered and overwhelmed him, ver. 5. If it was upon the occasion of Absalom's rebellion, we may suppose that the remembrance of his sin in the matter of Uriah, which God was now reckoning with him for, added much to the terror. Sometimes David's faith made him, in a manner, fearless, and he could boldly say, when surrounded with enemies, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. But at other times his fears prevailed; for the best men are not always alike strong in faith.

Do not these words describe the agony of the Son of David, when he went over the same brook Kedron, and up the ascent of the mount of Olives, also expecting speedily to be cut off, at the time of his passion, when his soul was sore amazed and very heavy, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death? 2 Sam. 15. 23—30; John 8. 1; Mark 14. 33, 34. And every man will find them applicable to himself in the day when the king of terrors shall draw up his forces in array against him.—(32.)

When a guilty conscience gives Satan advantage in assaulting our peace, we must mourn in our complaint, and even eminent believers have for a time been filled with inexpressible horror. But none was so overwhelmed as the holy Jesus, when it pleased the Lord to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for our sins. In his agony he prayed more earnestly, and was heard and delivered; trusting in him, and following him, we shall be supported under, and carried through all.

See how desirous David was to retire into a desert, any whither to be far enough from hearing the voice of the enemy, and seeing their oppressions. He said, ver. 6, said it to God in prayer, said it to himself in meditation, said it to his friends in complaint, O that I had wings like a dove! Weary of the treachery and ingratitude of men, and the cares and disappointments of his high station, he longed to have done with society, and to hide himself in some desert from the fury and fickleness of his people.

In his distressing exile it is probable David beheld the rapid flight of doves hovering over Jerusalem. Perceiving how speedily they transported themselves from place to place, he felt a momentary wish that their swift pinions were his, that he might escape far beyond the reach of his persecutors, and seek shelter in the wil-

derness from the gathering storm, which every hour became darker and more threatening.—(47.)

He would escape from the wind, storm, and tempest, the tumult and ferment that the city was now in, and the danger to which he was exposed. He aimed not at victory, but rest; a barren wilderness, so that he might be quiet, ver. 7. The wisest and best of men have most earnestly coveted peace and quietness, and the more when vexed and wearied with noise and clamour. Gracious souls wish to retire from the hurry and bustle of this world, that they may enjoy God and themselves; and if there be any true peace on this side heaven, they enjoy it in those retirements. This makes death desirable to a child of God, that it is a final escape from all the storms and tempests of this world to perfect and everlasting rest.

Ver. 9—15. David had rescued Jerusalem from the Jebusites, and made it the holy city by bringing the ark thither, yet now it was become the seat of violence and strife. No wickedness is so distressing to the believer as that which he witnesses in the visible church of God. With anguish he often perceives violence and discord where the gospel of peace is professed. Then destruction and sorrow are at hand; disunion will make way for further evils.

Let us not be surprised at the corruptions and disorders of the church on earth, but long to see the New Jerusalem, where there is no violence or strife, no mischief or guile.

He complains of one that had been very industrious against him; but not one that professed to hate him, ver. 13. The Chaldee names Ahithophel as here meant, and nothing seems to have discouraged David so much as to hear that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom, 2 Sam. 15. 31, for he was the king's counsellor, 1 Chron. 27. 33. All this must be very grievous to an ingenuous mind, and yet this was not all; this traitor had seemed a saint, else he had never been David's bosom friend, ver. 14. There always has been, and always will be a mixture of good and bad in the visible church, between whom, perhaps for a long time, we can discern no difference; but the Searcher of hearts does.

He prayed that God would disperse the violent, as he did the Babel-builders, ver. 9.

This prayer was answered in the turning of Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, by setting up the counsel of Hushai against it. God often destroys the church's enemies by dividing them. An interest divided against itself cannot long stand.

The true christian must expect trials from professed friends, from those with whom he has taken sweet counsel, and associated in the ordinances of God—this will be very painful; but by looking unto Jesus we shall be enabled to bear it. Christ was betrayed by a companion, a disciple, an apostle, who resembled Ahithophel in his crimes and in his doom. Both were speedily overtaken by Divine vengeance in as dreadful a manner as Dathan and Abiram when the pit opened.

The souls of impenitent sinners have a perfect sense of their miseries, and live still, ver. 15; they are still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the everlasting ruin of all those who oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah.

Ver. 16—23. In every trial let us call upon the Lord, and he will save us. We pray aright, when we pray with all that is within us; think first, and then pray over our thoughts; for the true nature of prayer is, lifting up the heart to God. Having meditated, he will cry, he will cry aloud; the fervour of his spirit in prayer shall be expressed. Our souls need spiritual nourishment, at least as often as our bodies need food; but we generally starve in the midst of abundance, because we pray so seldom and so carelessly. As it is fit that in the morning we should begin the day with God, and in the evening close it with him, so it is fit that in the midst of the day we should converse with him. It was Daniel's practice to pray three times a day, Dan. 6. 10; and noon was one of Peter's hours of prayer, Acts 10. 9. Let us not be weary of praying often, for God is not weary of hearing. He shall hear us, and not blame us for coming too often, but the oftener, the more welcome.

David assures himself that God would, in due time, give an answer of peace to his prayers, ver. 18. If he did not deliver him in victory, yet he would deliver him in peace, he delivered his soul in peace. Those are safe and easy, whose hearts and minds are kept by that peace of God which passes all understanding, Phil. 4. 7. David thought all were against him;

but now he sees there were many with him, more than he imagined; and this he gives to God the glory of, for it is he that raises us up friends, when we need them, and makes them faithful to us. With an eye of faith he now sees himself surrounded, as Elisha was, with chariots of fire and horses of fire, and therefore triumphs thus, There are many with me, more with me than against me, 2 Kings 6. 16, 17. There are more true christians, and believers have more real friends than in their gloomy hours they suppose.

His enemies should be reckoned with, and brought down; they could not ease themselves of their fears as David could, by faith in God. He here gives their character, as the reason why he expected God would bring them down, ver. 19. It is better to have changes and afflictions than to be hardened by uninterrupted prosperity, to live in a constant contempt and neglect of God, than which nothing makes men riper for ruin.

They are base and hypocritical. Flatterers, whose words are soft and insinuating, are always to be suspected and dreaded. Mortal men, though ever so high and strong, will easily be crushed by an eternal God. This the saints have comforted themselves with, in reference to the threatening power of the church's enemies.

God shall bring them down, not only to the dust, but to the pit of destruction, ver. 23. Those that are not reclaimed by the rod of affliction, ver. 19, will certainly be brought down into the pit of destruction.

The burden meant, ver. 22, is either the burden of afflictions, which sometimes is very heavy, especially when attended with the hidings of God's face, or the temptations of Satan—or else the burden of sin and corruption, under which the saints groan, and by which they are hindered in running their christian race, and which they are likely to carry with them to their graves. Their only relief under it is, to look to Christ, who bore and took it away; which may be meant by casting it on the Lord. He shall sustain thee, supplying all things necessary for the temporal and spiritual life, and support under all trials and difficulties.—(27.)

Whatever it is that thou desirest God should give thee, leave it to him to give it thee in his own way and time. Cast thy care upon the Lord, so the Greek version, to which the apostle refers, 1 Pet. 5. 7. Care is a burden, it makes the heart

stoop, Prov. 12. 25. We must cast it upon God by faith and prayer, commit our way and works to him; let him do as seemeth him good, and we will be satisfied. To cast our burden upon God, is to stay ourselves on his providence and promise, and to be very easy in the assurance that all shall work for good. If we do so, it is promised that he will sustain us, both support and supply us; will himself carry us in the arms of his power, as the nurse carries the child, will strengthen our spirits so by his Spirit, as that they shall sustain the infirmity. He has not promised to free us immediately from that trouble which gives rise to our cares and fears; but he will provide that we are not tempted above what we are able, and that we shall be able according as we are tempted. And he will never suffer the righteous to be moved; to be so shaken by any troubles, as to quit either their duty to God, or their comfort in him. He will not suffer them to be moved for ever; though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down.

David encourages himself and all good people to commit themselves to God, with confidence in him. He himself resolves to do so, ver. 23, I will trust in thee, in thy providence, and power, and mercy, not in my own prudence, strength, or merit.

We are to put our full trust and confidence only in his mercy who delivered David and the Son of David out of all their troubles. He, who once bore the burden of our sorrows, desires of us, that we would now and ever permit him to bear the burden of our cares—that, as he knoweth what is best for us, he may provide it accordingly. When shall we trust Christ to govern the world which he hath redeemed?—(32.)

Having thus found comfort ourselves, let us exhort and encourage our afflicted brethren to seek for the same remedy.

PSALM LVI.

It seems by this, and many other psalms, that David, when his dangers and fears were greatest, sang God's praises. He was in imminent peril when he penned this psalm, at least when he meditated it; yet even then his meditation of God was sweet. (1.) He seeks mercy from God, and confides in him amidst the rage and malice of his enemies, ver. 1—7. (2.) He recollects the Lord's acquaintance with his trials; rests his faith on God's promises, and declares his obligations to

praise him for mercies received and expressed, ver. 8—13.

This is called *Michtam*, A golden psalm. It is upon *Jonath-elem-rechokim*, which signifies, The silent dove afar off. Some apply that to David himself, who was innocent, mild, and patient as a dove at this time, 1 Sam. 21. forced to wander afar off, mourning, but silent, neither murmuring against God, nor railing at the instruments of his trouble; herein a type of Christ, who was as a sheep, dumb before the shearers; and a pattern to christians, who, wherever they are, and whatever injuries are done them, ought to be as silent doves.

Ver. 1—7. Be merciful unto me, O God. The petition, ver. 1, includes all the good we come to the throne of grace for. If we obtain mercy there, we obtain all we can desire, and need no more to make us happy. It implies likewise our best plea, not our merit, but God's mercy, his free, rich mercy. He prays that he might find mercy with God, for with men he could find no mercy. The mercy of God is what we may flee to, and trust to, and in faith pray for, when we are surrounded on all sides with difficulties and dangers.

His enemies were very numerous, ver. 2. They were very barbarous; they were very powerful; quite too hard for him, if God did not help him; they were very subtle and crafty; very restless and unwearied.

He encourages himself in God, and in his promises, power, and providence, ver. 3, 4. In the midst of his complaints, he triumphs in the Divine protection. There are times which are, in a special manner, times of fear with God's people; in these times, it is their duty and interest to trust in God as their God, and to know whom they have trusted. This will fix the heart, and keep it in peace. He resolves to make God's promises the matter of his praises, and so we have reason to make them. Thus supported, he will bid defiance to all adverse powers. As we must not trust to an arm of flesh, when it is engaged for us, so we must not be afraid of an arm of flesh, when it is stretched out against us.

He foresees, and foretells the fall of those that fought against him, and of all others that think to establish themselves in wicked practices, ver. 7. The sin of sinners will never be their security; God will in his anger cast down, and cast out such people. Who knows the power of

God's anger; how high it can reach, and how forcibly it can strike?

Ver. 8—13. The heavy and continued trials through which many of the Lord's people have passed, should teach us to be silent and patient under our lighter crosses. Yet we are often tempted to repine and despond under trivial sorrows.

For this we should check ourselves, and under every disquieting fear place our confidence in God. David here comforts himself, in the day of his distress and fear, that God took particular notice of all his grievances, and all his griefs, ver. 8. Thou tellest my wanderings, my flittings, so the old translation. David was but young, and yet he had many removes, and was now driven out; continual terrors and toils attended him, but this comforted him, that God numbered all the weary steps he took, by night or by day. God takes cognizance of all the afflictions of his people; and he does not cast out from his care and love, those whom men have cast out from their acquaintance and converse. While they keep in the path of duty, they cannot be driven from his gracious presence. Let us then be careful to discharge our obligations. When he was wandering, he was often weeping; and therefore prays, Put thou my tears into thy bottle, to be preserved and looked upon; nay, I know they are in the book of thy remembrance. God has a bottle and a book for his people's tears, both those for their sins, and those for their afflictions. This intimates that he observes them with compassion and tender concern; he is afflicted in their afflictions, and knows their souls in adversity. God will comfort his people according to the time wherein he has afflicted them.

His prayers would be powerful for the defeat and discomfiture of his enemies, as well as for his own support and encouragement, ver. 9. His faith in God would set him above the fear of man. In God have I put my trust, and in him only, and therefore I will not be afraid what man can do unto me, ver. 11. This triumphant word, so expressive of a holy magnanimity, the apostle puts into the mouth of every true believer, Heb. 13. 6. We may each of us boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and then I will not fear what man shall do unto me; for he has no power but what he has given him from above. He was in bonds to God, ver. 12.

PSALM LVII.

Thy vows are upon me, O God; not as a burden which I am loaded with, but as a badge which I glory in, as that by which I am known to be thy servant; as a bridle that restrains me from what would be hurtful to me, and directs me in the way of my duty. I will render praises unto thee, ver. 12. Vows of thankfulness properly accompany prayers for mercy. When we study what we shall render, the least we can resolve upon is to praise God.

Two things he will praise God for.

1. For what he had done for him, ver. 13.

If God have delivered us from sin, either from the commission of it by preventing grace, or from the punishment of it by pardoning mercy, we have reason to own that he has thereby delivered our souls from death, which is the wages of sin. If we, who were by nature dead in sin, are quickened together with Christ, and are made spiritually alive, we have to own that God has delivered our souls from death.

2. For what he would do for him; Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and so hast given me a new life, and an earnest of further mercy, that thou wilt deliver my feet from falling: thou hast begun a good work, therefore thou wilt carry it on, and perfect it. Those that know how to praise in faith, will give God thanks for the mercies in promise and prospect, as well as those in possession. David hopes that God would deliver his feet from falling either into sin, which would wound his conscience, or into the appearance of sin, from which his enemies would take occasion to wound his good name. See what he builds this hope upon. God never brought his people out of Egypt, to slay them in the wilderness. We should aim in all our desires and expectations of deliverance, both from sin and trouble, that we may do God so much the better service; that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we may serve him without fear, ver. 13. Let us be careful to perform our vows, when delivered, and we may leave all the rest with the Lord. If his grace has delivered our souls from the death of sin, he will deliver our feet from falling, and bring us to heaven, to walk before him for ever, in the light of the living.

8. It was customary among the ancients to preserve their tears in small bottles or vases, of earthenware or glass, called *lachrymatories*. These are often found in ancient sepulchres where they have been placed as memorials of the sorrow of surviving friends.

This psalm was composed when David was both in danger of trouble, and in temptation to sin. (1.) He begins with prayer and complaint, yet not without assurance of speeding in his request, ver. 1—6. (2.) He concludes with joy and praise, ver. 7—11. Hence we may take direction and encouragement, both in our supplications, and in our thanksgivings.

The title of this psalm has *Al-taschith—Destroy not*. Some think it to be a tune to which this psalm was set; others apply it to the occasion and matter of the psalm; *Destroy not*. David must not be destroyed, for a blessing is in him, Isa. 65. 8. even Christ, the best of blessings. When David was in the cave, in imminent peril, he here tells us what were the workings of his heart toward God; and happy they that have such good thoughts as these in their minds, when in danger.

Ver. 1—6. David supports himself with faith and hope in God, and prayer to him, ver. 1, 2. All his dependence is upon God; My soul trusteth in thee, ver. 1. He did not only profess to trust in God, but his soul did indeed rely on God only. God, by his promise, offers himself to us, to be trusted; we, by our faith must accept of him, and put our trust in him.

Protection from the injustice of man, must be sought from the mercy of the Lord; and the most eminent believers need frequently to repeat the publican's prayer, God be merciful to me a sinner. Inward consciousness that our souls trust in the Lord, may assure us, in our utmost dangers, that our calamities will at length be overpast, and in the mean time, by faith and prayer, we must make the shadow of his almighty wings our refuge.

All his desire is toward God, ver. 2. In every thing that befalls us, we ought to see and own the hand of God. Whatever God performs concerning his people, it will appear, in the issue, to have been performed for them, and for their benefit. Though God be high, most high, yet he condescends so low, as to take care that all things are made to work for good to them. This is a good reason why we should not only pray, but pray earnestly.

All his expectation is from God, ver. 3. Observe whence he expects the salvation—from heaven. Look which way he will on this earth refuge fails, no help appears;

but he looks for it from heaven: they that lift up their hearts to things above, may from thence expect all good. If we have fled from the wrath to come, unto Jesus Christ, we are interested in all the promises and perfections of our God. He that hath performed all things needful to purchase the salvation of his people, will perform for us and in us, all things needful for our enjoyment of it.

He represents the power and malice of his enemies, ver. 4. It is true that the men among whom we live are often savage and fierce, and Satan would swallow us up; but we are safe if we belong to the Lord. It indeed made David droop to think that there should be those that bore him so much ill-will. But the mischief they designed against him, returned upon themselves.

He prays to God to glorify himself and his own great name, ver. 5. God's glory should lie nearer our hearts, and we should be more concerned for it, than for any particular interests of our own. When David was in the greatest distress and disgrace, he did not pray, Lord, exalt me, but, Lord, exalt thine own name. Thus the Son of David, when his soul was troubled, and he prayed, Father, save me from this hour, immediately withdrew that petition, and presented this, For this cause came I to this hour; Father, glorify thy name, John 12. 27, 28.

And chiefly was He exalted, when, having raised up his Son Jesus, he set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers, and every thing that is named in heaven and in earth. This was the great exaltation, prefigured, foretold, and incessantly prayed for in the ancient church.—(32.)

Our best encouragement, in prayer, is taken from the glory of God, and to that therefore, more than our own comfort, we should have regard in all our petitions for particular mercies. This is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which regulates and directs all the rest, Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Ver. 7—11. David's prayers and complaints, by lively faith, are here, of a sudden, turned into praises and thanksgivings. Observe, My heart is fixed, ver. 7. With reference to God's providences; it is prepared for every event, being stayed upon God, 112. 7; Isa. 26. 3. My heart is fixed, and then none of these things move

me, Acts 20. 24. If by the grace of God we are brought into this even composed frame of spirit, we have great reason to be thankful. Nothing is done to purpose, in religion, unless it is done with the heart. The heart must be fixed for the duty, put in frame for it; fixed in the duty by a close application; attending on the Lord without distraction.

He excites himself to the duty of praise, ver. 8; our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God; or, my soul, that must be first awakened; dull and sleepy devotions will never be acceptable to God; we must stir up ourselves, and all that is within us, to praise God. He will awake early to this work, early in the morning, to begin the day with God; early in the beginning of a mercy; when God is coming towards us with his favours, let us go forth to meet him with our praises.

His own heart was much affected and enlarged in praising God, ver. 9. He desired to bring others to join with him in praising God; he will publish God's praises among the people, that the ends of the earth may see his salvation. When David was driven into heathen lands, he openly avowed his veneration for the God of Israel. David, in his psalms, may be said to be still praising God among the people, singing to him among the nations.

That which was the matter of his hope and comfort, ver. 3, is the matter of his thanksgiving, ver. 10. The Lord will send forth his mercy and truth; and, graciously accomplishing his promises, will rescue our souls from all tempters and persecutors: angels and men shall join in celebrating his glory in the work of salvation.

The words he had used, ver. 5, to sum up his prayers, he here uses again, to sum up his praises. Let us then seek to have our hearts fixed on and prepared for his spiritual worship; to celebrate the praises of his boundless mercy and unfailing faithfulness; and to glorify him with body, soul, and spirit, which are his. Let us earnestly pray for the Lord's exaltation above the heavens, and his glory above the earth, by extending the blessings of the gospel through every land.

7—11. The last five verses are nearly the same as the first five verses of Psalm 108.

PSALM LVIII.

It is supposed that Saul instituted some proceeding in form of law against David,

and by corrupting the elders, obtained an unjust sentence against him. Thus the Sanhedrim or council of the Jews, and Pilate, condemned Jesus to be put to death. In both cases the parties inwardly intended wickedness, and while they pretended to justice they committed violence. In this psalm, (1.) David describes the iniquity of his judges as the result of natural depravity; and as resembling the venom of the adder, ver. 1—5. (2.) He prays that they may be disabled, and predicts their ruin; with the joy of the righteous, and the conviction of sinners who beheld it, ver. 6—11. Sin appears here exceedingly sinful and dangerous, and God a just avenger of wrong.

Ver. 1—5. Injustice, committed under the form of law, and decreed by judges, is worse than any other; especially it is grievous to behold those who profess to be the children of God, combining against the remnant of his people. But while we behold the effects of natural depravity in the crimes of others, we should be humbled by recollecting that the principles of them all are in our hearts also. We should be thankful to the Lord for merciful restraints; we should be more earnest in seeking renewing grace, more watchful over ourselves, and more patient under the effects of fallen nature in others.

The corruption of their nature was the root of bitterness from which that gall and wormwood sprang, ver. 3. A sinful state is a state of estrangement from that acquaintance with God, and service of him, which we were made for. We may see in children the wickedness of the world beginning. They go astray from God and their duty as soon as they are born, as soon as possibly they can; the foolishness that is bound up in the heart, appears with the first operations of reason; as the wheat springs up, the tares spring up with it.

How soon will little children tell a lie, to excuse a fault, or in their own commendation! No sooner can they speak than they speak to God's dishonour; tongue-sins are among our first actual transgressions. Dislike to religion, ingenuity at inventing lies, pride, vanity, envy, anger, are rank weeds which, if neglected, will overspread the mind, and prevent the growth of every good thing. It is our duty therefore to bestow pains upon their education, and above all, earnestly to pray for con-

verting grace to make them new creatures. Though the poison of a serpent be within us, it may be, in a great measure, prevented from breaking forth to the injury of others. When the Saviour's instructions, reasonings, and persuasions are duly regarded, the serpent becomes harmless. But they who refuse to hear Him that speaketh in strains of heavenly wisdom, must perish miserably and for ever. Thus sinners stop their ears and close their hearts against conviction and persuasion, rushing forward in rebellion and enmity against God and his cause.

4, 5. Both ancient and modern writers mention persons who possess an extraordinary influence over some kinds of serpents. This appears generally to be effected by the sound of musical instruments, and very surprising instances are related by travellers of the power of these charmers over the reptiles, which come from their hiding places when they hear the music. It is common for these persons to break out the teeth, ver. 6, or poisonous fangs of the serpents, and then carry them about, and cause them to dance for the amusement of spectators. See *Forbes, Browne, Niebuhr, &c.*

Ver. 6—11. David prayed against his enemies, and all such enemies of God's church and people; he was actuated by a public spirit. He prays that they might be disabled to do any further mischief, ver. 6; that they might not be able to make a prey of others. That they might be disappointed in the plots they had laid, and might not gain their point, ver. 7. And ver. 7, 8, that they and their interest might waste and come to nothing. We may, in faith, pray against the designs of the church's enemies.

He foretells their ruin, ver. 9. The sense is plain, that the judgments of God often surprise wicked people. When they are beginning to walk in the light of their own fire, and the sparks of their own kindling, they are made to lie down in sorrow, Isa. 50. 11; and their laughter proves like the crackling of thorns under a pot, the comfort of which is soon gone. There is no standing before the destruction that comes from the Almighty—Who knows the power of God's anger?

David's cause was that of true religion, and though he would not avenge himself, he knew that the Lord would. Then the righteous would rejoice, ver. 10, not in the misery of Saul and his party, but in the triumph of truth and piety over ungodliness and wickedness; while those who witnessed these events would be convinced of the reality of religion.

The vengeance God takes on the wicked in this world, will bring men to say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous. Some shall have this confession extorted from them, others shall have their minds so changed, that they shall willingly own that God is, and that he is the bountiful rewarder of his saints and servants. Whatever damage a man may sustain, whatever hazard he may run, and whatever hardship he may undergo for his religion, he shall not only be no loser by it, but an unspeakable gainer, in the issue.

It shall be as great a refreshment to the saints, to see God glorified in the ruin of sinners, as it is to a weary traveller, to have his feet washed. The sight of the vengeance shall make them tremble before God, 119. 120, and shall convince them of the evil of sin, and the obligations they lie under to God.

The victories of the Just One, gained in his own person and that of his faithful servants, over the enemies of man's salvation, produce a joy which springeth not from revenge, but from a view of the Divine mercy, justice, and truth, displayed in the redemption of the elect, the punishment of the ungodly, and the fulfilment of the promises. Whoever duly weighs and considers these things, will diligently seek after the reward of righteousness, and humbly adore the Providence which ordereth all things aright in heaven and in earth.—(32.)

All this was signally verified in the destruction of Jerusalem, after the Jews had crucified their Messiah; it hath had and will have repeated accomplishments in the establishment of true christianity, but the day of its grand and final fulfilment is yet to come. The righteous in due time will rejoice at the destruction of all antichristian corrupters of the faith. \

9. Fuel in the east is often very scarce, and composed of such light substances as are quickly consumed. \

PSALM LIX.

This psalm is of the same nature and scope with several preceding psalms: they contain David's complaints of the malice of his enemies, and of their cursed and cruel designs against him; his prayers and prophecies against them; and his comfort and confidence in God as his God. They also look forward to Christ and the enemies of his kingdom. In this

psalm, (1.) He prays to God to defend and deliver him from his enemies, representing them as barbarous, malicious, and atheistical, ver. 1—7. (2.) He foresees and foretells the destruction of his enemies, which he would give to God the glory of, ver. 8—17.

Ver. 1—7. In these words we hear the voice of David when a prisoner in his own house; the voice of Christ when surrounded by his merciless enemies; the voice of the church when under bondage in the world; and the voice of the christian when under temptation, affliction, and persecution.—(32.)

David cries out as one ready to perish that looked to God only for salvation and deliverance. He prays, ver. 4, Awake to help me. Thus the disciples, in the storm, awoke Christ, saying, Master, save us, we perish. And thus earnestly should we pray daily, to be defended and delivered from our spiritual enemies, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of our own hearts, which war against our spiritual life.

Our God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him; not to move him, but to move ourselves; David does so here. He pleads the bad character of his enemies, ver. 2. He pleads their malice against him, and the imminent danger he was in from them, ver. 3. He pleads his own innocence, not as to God, he was never backward to own himself guilty before him, but as to his persecutors. What they charged him with, was utterly false, nor had he ever said or done any thing to deserve such treatment from them. The innocence of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. For Christ's sake, they are hated of all men. Though our innocence will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves well toward those that behave themselves ill toward us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. Note; It is not strange, if those regard not what they themselves say, who have made themselves believe that God regards not what they say.

David refers himself and his cause to the just judgment of God, ver. 5. He is very sure, that there will be a day of visitation, Isa. 10. 3, and to that day he refers

himself, with this solemn appeal. We should fear suffering as evil doers, but not be afraid or ashamed of the hatred of workers of iniquity.

Ver. 8—17. David here resolves to wait upon God, ver. 9. It is our wisdom and duty, in times of danger and difficulty, to wait upon God; for he is our defence, our high-place, in whom we shall be safe. Because of the Lord's strength, his servants may confidently wait on him. He hopes that God will be to him a God of mercy, ver. 10. It is very comfortable to us, in prayer, to look to God, not only as the God of mercy, but as the God of *our* mercy, the Author of all good in us, and the Giver of all good to us. David hopes that he will be to his persecutors a God of vengeance. His expectation of this he expresses partly by way of prediction. He foresees that God would expose them to scorn, ver. 8. They think God does not hear them, does not heed them; but thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them for their folly, to think that he who planted the ear, shall not hear; and thou shalt have not them only, but all other such heathenish people, that live without God in the world, in derision. God would make them monuments of his justice, ver. 11. They would be dealt with according to their deserts, ver. 12. There is malignity in tongue-sins, more than is commonly thought. Cursing, and lying, and speaking proudly, are some of the worst of the sins of the tongue; and that man is truly miserable whom God deals with according to the deserts of these. God would glorify himself, as Israel's God and King, in their destruction, ver. 13. He would make their sin their punishment, ver. 14, 15; compare ver. 6. They should be insatiable, which is the greatest misery of all in a poor condition; They are greedy dogs which can never have enough, Isa. 56. 11, and they grudge if they are not satisfied. A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet does not grudge, does not quarrel with Providence, nor fret within himself. It is ~~not~~ poverty, but discontent that makes a man unhappy.

He expects that God's providence would find him matter for praise, and that God's grace would work in him a heart for praise, ver. 16, 17. He would praise his power and his mercy. God's power by which he is able to help us, and his mercy

by which he is inclined to help us, will justly be the everlasting praise of all the saints. He would praise him, because he had, many a time, and all along, found him his defence, and his refuge, in the day of trouble. He would praise him, because he still had dependence upon him, and confidence in him, as his strength to support him and carry him on in his duty. He that is all this to us, is certainly worthy of our best affections, praises, and services. As we must direct our prayers to God, so to him we must direct our praises.

Saul and his followers, in vain sought the life of David. They could not prevent his advancement to the throne, but they occasioned their own ignominy and ruin. Nor could the rulers of the Jews, by crucifying Jesus, prevent his glorification, but thereby they hastened their own destruction; nor will persecutors or tempters succeed better by lying in wait for the soul of the believer. The serpent and his seed may bruise the heel of the Redeemer and his people; but He will crush their head. The trials of his people will issue in joy and praise. When the night of affliction is over, they will sing of the Lord's power and mercy in the morning. He is their defence and refuge in the time of their troubles. Let believers now, in assured faith and hope, praise him for those mercies, for which they will rejoice and praise him for ever.

14. In eastern cities there are often large numbers of dogs, who have no masters, but prow about the streets, especially by night, devouring whatever they can find to satisfy their hunger.

PSALM LX.

David, in prosperity, was as devout as David in adversity. In this psalm (1.) he reflects upon their bad state for many years, in which God had been contending with them, ver. 1—3. He takes notice of the recent happy improvement, ver. 4. He prays for the deliverance of God's Israel from their enemies, ver. 5. (2.) He triumphs in hope of their victories over their enemies, and begs of God to carry on and complete them, ver. 6—12.

Title. The title may be read, "To the giver of victory, upon the six-stringed lute, a golden instructive psalm of David, when he contended with Aram Naharaim, and Aram-Zobah; when Joab returned from smiting twelve thousand Edomites in the valley of Salt." It is not improbable that this psalm was sung by the armies

of Israel when marching forth against the Edomites.—*Morison*.

Ver. 1—5. In these verses, we have a melancholy memorial of the many disgraces and disappointments, which God had put his people under. God sometimes shows even his own people hard things in this world, that they may not take up their rest in it, but may dwell at ease in him only. David owns God's displeasure to be the cause of all the hardships they had undergone. Whatever our trouble is, and whoever are the instruments of it, we must own the hand of God, his righteous hand in it. The generality of the people had dreadful apprehensions of the issue of these things; the good people themselves were in a consternation, ver. 3.

Now this is mentioned for the instruction of the people. When God is turning his hand in our favour, it is good to remember our former calamities, that we may retain the good impressions they made upon us. Our souls must still have the affliction and the misery in remembrance, that they may be humbled within us, Lam. 3. 19, 20. Also that God's goodness to us, in relieving and raising us up, may be more magnified. And that we may not be secure, but may always rejoice with trembling, as those that know not how soon we may be returned into the furnace we were lately taken from, as the silver is when not thoroughly refined.

Here is a thankful notice of the encouragement God had given them to hope that things would now begin to mend, ver. 4. The pious Israelites, who feared God, and had a regard to the Divine designation of David to the throne, took his elevation as a token for good, and like the lifting up of a banner to them. It united them, it animated them, and put life and courage into them. It struck a terror upon their enemies. Christ, the Son of David, is given for an ensign of the people, Isa. 11. 10, for a banner to those that fear God; in him they are gathered together in one; to him they seek, in him they glory and take courage; his love is the banner over them, in his name and strength they wage war with the powers of darkness, and under him the church becomes terrible as an army with banners.

Here is also an humble petition for seasonable mercy. In his displeasure

their calamities began, and therefore in his favour their prosperity must begin; O turn thyself to us again; be at peace with us, and in that peace we shall have peace. Heal the breaches of our land, ver. 2, not only the breaches made upon us by our enemies, but the breaches made among ourselves by our unhappy divisions. Those breaches which the folly and corruption of man makes, nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace, by which only a kingdom is saved from ruin. That thus they might be preserved out of the hands of their enemies. They that fear God, are his beloved; they are often in distress, but they shall be delivered. God's praying people may take the general deliverances of the church, as answers to their prayers in particular. For the share they have with others in the benefit of them, they may each say, with peculiar satisfaction, God has therein heard me, and answered me.

The anger of God against sin is the only cause of all misery, personal or public, in families, churches, and nations, that has been, is, or shall be endured, in time; or to eternity. The true believer, if he commits iniquity, will sometimes be showed heavy things, till severe anguish and dismay for a time seize upon him. In all these cases there is no remedy but by returning to the Lord with repentance, faith, and prayer; beseeching him to return to us, and heal the breaches that sin has made. He who exalted the Saviour by his own right hand, to the throne of glory, will hear his intercession for all who pray in his name, and are beloved for his sake, and will save them by his almighty power.

Ver. 6—12. David here rejoices in prospect of two things; 1. The perfecting of his own kingdom. Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all yea and amen in Christ. God has spoken in his holiness, and then pardon is mine, peace mine, grace mine, Christ mine, heaven mine, God himself mine, 1 Cor. 3. 22, 23. If Christ be ours, all things are ours, and shall one way or another be for our eternal good. The man, who is in Christ a new creature, may rejoice in all the precious promises which God hath spoken in his holiness. His present privileges, and

the sanctifying influences of the Spirit which he experiences, are the sure earnest of heavenly glory.

2. The conquering of the neighbouring nations, which had been vexatious to Israel, ver. 8. The Moabites became David's servants, 2 Sam. 8. 2. Edom was to be taken possession of, which was signified by drawing off his shoe over it, Ruth 4. 7, to be trodden under foot. Let Philistia now triumph over Israel and David, as in times past, if it could. However, these conquests were not completed. Some strong city yet remained unsubdued; but David would not rely on his own conduct, but on the Lord, who had cast off, but was returned to his people. At the time that they own God's justice in what was past, they hoped in his mercy for what was to come. The Son of David, in his sufferings, seemed to be cast off by his Father, when he cried out, Why hast thou forsaken me? And yet even then he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last; for he is gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God, his spiritual Israel, are likewise, through him, more than conquerors. Though sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last. A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly, but that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. However, we are not yet made complete conquerors, and no true believer will abuse these truths to the indulgence of sloth, or vain confidence.

David prays in hope, ver. 11. The hope with which believers support themselves in this prayer shows, 1. Diffidence of themselves, and all their creature-confidences; Vain is the help of man. 2. A confidence in God, and in his power and promise, ver. 12. Our confidence in God must encourage and quicken our endeavours in the way of duty. Hope in God is the best principle of true courage, for what need they fear, who have God on their side? It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly; he puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolu-

tion. Though we do ever so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him, and not to ourselves. All our victories, as well as our valour, are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crowns must be cast.

The church also, over which oppressors have so often insulted, shall ere long triumph over them all; and while they who willingly submit to our anointed King shall share his glories, all his foes shall be put under his feet.

5—12. These verses are repeated, Ps. 108. 6—13.

7, 8, 9. The sense of these verses appears to be, Gilead and Manassah have submitted to me; Ephraim furnishes me with valiant men; and Judah with men of prudence and wisdom. I will reduce the Moabites to servitude; I will triumph over the Edomites and subjugate them, and the Philistines shall add to my triumph.—*Greenfield.*

PSALM LXI.

David, in this psalm, as in many others, begins with prayers and tears, but ends with praise. Thus the soul, being lifted up to God, returns to the enjoyment of itself. He resolves to persevere in his duty, encouraged thereto both by his experience, and by his expectations. (1.) He will call upon God, because God had protected him, and had provided well for him, ver. 1—4. (2.) He will praise God, because he had an assurance of the continuance of God's favour to him, ver. 5—8. In this psalm, we find that which is very expressive both of faith and of hope.

Ver. 1—4. Observe David's close adherence and application to God by prayer in the day of his distress and trouble. I will cry unto thee, ver. 2, not cry to other gods, but to thee only; not fall out with thee because thou afflictest me, but still look unto thee, and wait upon thee; not in a cold and careless manner, but with the greatest importunity and fervency of spirit, as one that will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Wherever we are, we may have liberty of access to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace. Nay, because I am here in the end of the earth, in sorrow and solitude, therefore I will cry unto thee. That which separates us from our other comforts, should drive us so much the nearer to God the fountain of all comfort. He will do this, notwithstanding the dejection and despondency of his spirit; Though my heart is overwhelmed, it is not so

sunk, so burdened, but that it may be lifted up to God in prayer. Nay, because my heart is ready to be overwhelmed, therefore I will cry unto thee, for by that means it will be supported and relieved. Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it.

When his heart was overwhelmed, and he was ready to sink, he prays, Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Lord, give me such an assurance and satisfaction of my own safety, as I can never attain to, but by thy special grace working such a faith in me. Or, to the rock on the top of which I shall be set further out of the reach of my troubles, than I can be by any power or wisdom of my own. God's power and promise are a rock that is higher than we. This rock is Christ; they are safe that are in him. We cannot get upon this Rock, unless God by his power lead us; I will put thee in the clift of the rock, Exod. 33. 22. On the Divine mercy, as on a rock, David desired to rest his soul out of the reach of tempestuous waves which raged below; but he was like a shipwrecked sailor, exposed to the billows at the bottom of a rock too high for him to climb without help. Thus David found that he could not ascend by faith and hope, and be established on the rock of salvation unless the Lord placed him upon it.

No outward situation can exclude us from communion with God through Jesus Christ; but without Divine assistance we can neither climb upon, nor take shelter in that Rock of salvation. As there is safety in Him, and none in ourselves, let us pray to be led to and fixed upon this our rock.

As experience is acquired, encouragement will abound. Past experiences of the benefit of trusting in God, as they should engage us still to keep close to him, so they should encourage us to hope that it will not be in vain. Thou hast been my strong tower from the enemy, and thou art as strong as ever, and thy name as much a refuge to the righteous as ever it was, Prov. 18. 10.

He resolves to continue in the way of duty to God, and dependence on him, ver. 4. The service of God shall be his constant work and business: all those must make it so, who expect to find God their shelter and strong tower. He speaks of abiding in the tabernacle for ever, because that tabernacle was a type and

figure of heaven, Heb. 9. 8, 9, 24. The grace of God and the covenant of grace shall be his constant comfort; I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings, as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a shelter to them, ought still to have recourse to him in all their straits. This advantage they have that abide in God's tabernacle, that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

Ver. 5—8. In these verses, we see with what pleasure David looks back upon what God had done for him formerly, ver. 5. God is a witness to all our vows, all our good purposes, and all our solemn promises of new obedience. He keeps an account of them, which should be a good reason with us, as it was with David, why we should perform our vows, ver. 8. There is a peculiar people in the world, that fear God's name, ver. 5, that with holy reverence accept of all the discoveries he is pleased to make of himself to the children of men. There is a heritage peculiar to that people—present comforts, earnestness of their future bliss. God himself is their inheritance, their portion for ever. Those that fear God have enough in him, and therefore must not complain, if they have but little of the world. We need desire no better heritage than that of those who fear God.

Thou shalt prolong the king's life, ver. 6. There were those that aimed to shorten David's life, but he trusted to God to prolong his life. His resolution was, to abide in God's tabernacle for ever, ver. 4, in a way of duty; and now his hope is, that he shall abide before God for ever, in a way of comfort. Those abide to good purpose in this world, that abide before God; that serve him, and walk in his fear; and they that do so, shall abide before him for ever. Or this may be understood of the Messiah, of whom it seems to be especially intended.

These words are to be applied to Him of whom the angel said, The Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end, Luke 1. 32. The ancient church prayed for his exaltation and glory under those of his representative: the Chaldee paraphrast expounds this passage of Messiah only.—(32.)

With importunity David begs of God to

take him and keep him always under his protection. God's promises, and our faith in them, are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer. We need not desire to be better secured than under the protection of God's mercy and truth. If we partake of that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, we may rejoice and sing praise unto him, whatever be our outward circumstances; and while employed in that pleasant service, according to our engagements, we may look forward to praising him for ever.

With cheerfulness he vows the grateful returns of duty to God, ver. 8. Praising God and paying our vows to him, must be our constant daily work, because we daily receive fresh mercies: if we think it too much to do it daily, we cannot expect to do it eternally.

PSALM LXII.

In this psalm, (1.) David, with great pleasure, professes his own confidence in God, and dependence upon him, and encourages himself to continue waiting on him, ver. 1—7. (2.) With earnestness he excites and encourages others to trust in God likewise, and not in any creature, ver. 8—12.

Ver. 1—7. Here we have David's profession of dependence upon God, and upon him only, for all good. The lively believer, conscious of his sincerity, can without hesitation avow, Truly my soul waiteth upon God. We are in the way both of duty and comfort, when our souls wait upon God; when we cheerfully refer ourselves, and the disposal of all our affairs, to his will and wisdom; when we acquiesce in, and accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence, and patiently expect the event, with an entire satisfaction in his righteousness and goodness, however it be. Is not my soul subject to God? So the Greek. So it is, certainly so it ought to be; our wills must be melted into his will. He doubts not but his salvation will come, though now he was threatened and in danger; and he expects it to come from God, and from him only; therefore on him will he patiently wait till it does come, for his time is the best time. Let our souls wait on God, to be conducted through this world to eternal salvation, in such way as he thinks fit.

See the ground and reason of this de-

pendence, ver. 2. Many a time in him I have found shelter, and strength, and succour; he has by his grace supported me, and borne me up under my troubles, and by his providence defended and delivered me. He only can be my Rock and my Salvation; creatures are insufficient, they are nothing without him, and therefore I will look above them to him. He has by covenant undertaken to be so. Even he that is the Rock of ages, is my Rock; he that is the God of salvation, is my Salvation.

Trusting in God, his heart is fixed. He may be perplexed, but not in despair, 2 Cor. 4. 8. This hope in God will be an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. The believer, however blameless, must expect some measure of the enmity with which the world treated his Saviour; but the doom of David's persecutors, and of the crucifiers of Christ, may be expected by all who would injure his people, or tempt them to sin.

If God be for us, we need not fear what man can do against us, though ever so mighty and malicious. He here gives a character of his enemies. Envy was at the bottom of their malice. He reads their doom, not as a king, but as a prophet; Ye shall be slain all of you, by the righteous judgments of God. Saul and his servants were slain by the Philistines on mount Gilboa; those who seek the ruin of God's chosen, are but preparing ruin for themselves. God's church is built upon a rock which will stand; but they that fight against it shall be as a bowing wall and a tottering fence, which sinks with its own weight, and buries those in the ruins that put themselves under the shadow and shelter of it. David, having put his confidence in God, thus foresees the overthrow of his enemies, and, in effect, sets them at defiance.

He is himself encouraged to continue waiting upon God, ver. 5—7. The good we do, we should stir up ourselves to continue doing, and to do yet more and more, as those who have, through grace, experienced the comfort and benefit of it. We have found it good to wait upon God, and therefore should charge our souls to have such a constant dependence upon him, as may make us always easy. His salvation was the principal matter of David's expectation, ver. 3; let him have that from God, and he expects no more. His salvation being from God, all his other expectations

are from him. If God will save my soul, as to every thing else I will acquiesce in his disposals, knowing they shall all turn to my salvation, Phil. 1. 19. He repeats, ver. 6, what he had said concerning God, ver. 2, as one that dwelt much upon it in his thoughts. The more faith is acted, the more active it is. The more we meditate upon God's attributes and promises, and our own experience, the more we get above our fears, and we shall be kept in perfect peace, Isa. 26. 3. And as David's faith in God advances to an unshaken stayedness, so his joy in God improves into a holy triumph, ver. 7. Where our salvation is, there our glory is; for what is our salvation but glory to be revealed? Meditation and prayer are blessed means of strengthening faith and hope.

Ver. 8—12. Here we have David's exhortation to others to trust in God, and wait upon him, as he had done. Those that have found the comfort of the ways of God themselves, will invite others into those ways; there is enough in God for all the saints to draw from, and we shall never have the less for others sharing.

Observe to whom he gives this good counsel, ver. 8. All people, all shall be welcome to trust in God. The good counsel which he gives is to confide in God. Depend upon him to perform all things for you. Do this at all times. We must have confidence in God always, must live a life of dependence upon him; must so trust in him at all times, as not at any time to put that confidence in ourselves, or in any creature, which is to be put in him only. And we must have an actual confidence in God upon all occasions; trust in him to guide us when we are in doubt, to protect us when we are in danger, to supply us when in want, to strengthen us for every good word and work.

And to converse with God. When we make a penitent confession of sin, our hearts are poured out before God, 1 Sam. 7. 6. But here it is meant of prayer, which, if it be as it should be, is the pouring out of the heart before God. We must lay our grievances before him, offer up our desires to him with all humble freedom, and then entirely refer ourselves to his disposal, patiently submitting our wills to his: this is pouring out our hearts. Encouragement is given us to take this good counsel; God is a refuge for us; not only my Refuge, ver. 7, but a Refuge for

all, even as many as will flee to him, and take shelter in him.

Observe the cautions to take heed of misplacing our confidence, in which, as much as in any thing, the heart is deceitful, Jer. 17. 5—9. They that trust in God truly, ver. 1, will trust in him only, ver. 5.

The psalmist warns against trusting in men. The multitude, those of low degree, are changeable as the wind; those whom they idolize to-day, they abhor to-morrow. The rich and noble seem to have much in their power, and are lavish of promises; but those that depend on them, continually experience disappointment. Weighed in the balance of scripture, all that man can do to make us happy is lighter than vanity itself.

Of all things here below, poor, deluded man is chiefly tempted, even to the end of life, to place his confidence on wealth; and when riches increase, it is hard for man to keep his affections sufficiently detached from them. But he who, by injustice, acquires earthly mammon, justly forfeits the treasures of heaven; and he who is made vain and covetous by money, however honestly gotten, renders that a curse to one, which was designed as a blessing to many. He drowns himself in the spring which should have watered all around him.—(32.)

It is hard to have riches, and not to trust in them, if they increase, though by lawful and honest means; but we must take heed, lest we set our affections inordinately upon them. It is a smiling world, that is most likely to draw the heart away from God, on whom alone it should be set. The consistent believer receives *all* from God as a trust; and seeks to use it to his glory, as a steward who must render an account.

David gives the reason why we should make God our confidence; because he is a God of infinite power, mercy, and righteousness, ver. 11, 12. God hath spoken it, solemnly declared it, as it were once for all, and the psalmist had repeatedly heard and experienced, that power and mercy belong to him alone. The Lord can punish and destroy; he can save and bless as he pleases; all created power is from him. Mercy also belongeth to him; and his recompensing the defiled, imperfect services of those that believe in him, blotting out their transgressions for the Redeemer's sake, is a proof of his abundant mercy, and is encouragement to us

to trust in him. Let us trust in his mercy and grace, and, as believers, abound in his work, expecting a gracious recompense from him alone.

11, 12. Or, "Once hath God spoken—these two things have I heard, that strength is the Lord's, and to thee, Lord, is mercy."—*A. Clarke.*

PSALM LXIII.

This psalm has in it much warmth and lively devotion. Some of the sweetest of David's psalms were those that were penned in a wilderness. That which grieved him most in his banishment, was the want of public ordinances. Yet it is not them, but the God of the ordinances, his heart is upon. Here we have, (1.) His desire toward God, ver. 1, 2. (2.) His esteem of God, ver. 3, 4. His satisfaction in God, ver. 5. His secret communion with God, ver. 6. (3.) His joyful dependence upon God, ver. 7, 8. His holy triumph in God over his enemies, and in assurance of his own safety, ver. 9—11.

Ver. 1, 2. David, chased by Saul from the courts of the Lord, and wandering in the desert of Judah, was a weary traveller in a dry and thirsty land, and his earnest desire of attending the ordinances of the sanctuary, affected his body as well as his soul. The worship and services of the sanctuary were means by which the Holy Spirit discovered to David the glories of the Divine perfections, and caused him to experience the power of grace upon his heart; this made him regret the loss of such opportunities.

Early will I seek thee. The true christian dedicates to God the morning hour. He opens the eyes of his understanding with those of his body, and awakes each morning to righteousness. He arises with thirst after those comforts which the world cannot give, and has immediate recourse by prayer to the Fountain of the water of life.—(32.)

The true believer is convinced that nothing in this sinful world can satisfy the wants and desires of his immortal soul; he therefore expects his happiness from God, as his portion. Experience of his grace and love lead him to seek the Lord early every day, with the best of his time and affections. The psalmist's uneasiness represents another experience of the gracious soul, when faith and hope are most in exercise; the world appears to him a weary desert, and he longs for the

joys of heaven, of which he hath had some foretastes in the ordinances of God upon earth.

Ver. 3—6. How soon are David's complaints and prayers turned into praises and thanksgivings! Even in the wilderness wells of salvation are opened. The want of stated means of grace sometimes excites stronger desires, and more earnestness to wait on God in secret. Faithful prayers may quickly be turned into joyful praises, if it be not our own fault. Let the hearts of those that seek the Lord, praise him for working desires in them, and giving assurance that he will satisfy them. Even in affliction we need not want matter for praise, if we have but a heart to it. When this is the habitual frame of a believer's mind, he values the loving-kindness of God more than life.

God's loving-kindness is better than life. It is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life, 30. 5. David, in the wilderness, finds that God's loving-kindness is better than life; and, Therefore, says he, my lips shall praise thee. Those that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favour, ought to have them enlarged in his praises.

He resolves to live a life of thankfulness to God, and dependence on him. Observe his continuance and perseverance therein. Praising God must be the work of our whole lives; we must every day give thanks to him for the benefits with which we are daily loaded. We must in every thing give thanks; and not be put out of frame for this duty by any of the afflictions of this present time. We must look to God's name, to all by which he has made himself known, in all our prayers and praises. And when we lift up the hands that hang down, in comfort and joy, it must be in God's name; from him our comforts must be fetched, and to him they must be devoted. The pleasures of this world lose their attraction; the soul of the believer is satisfied while joyfully praising and thinking upon his God.

And in conversing with him in solitude, he shall be thus satisfied, ver. 5. There is that in a gracious God, and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a soul, 36. 8; 65. 4. And there is that in a gracious soul, which takes satisfaction in God. The saints desire no more than his favour to make them happy; and they have a transcendent

complacency in God, in comparison with which all the delights of sense are without relish. He will praise God with joyful lips. He will praise him openly. When with the heart man believes, and is thankful, with the mouth confession must be made of both, to the glory of God. We must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to the duties of religion with cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God from a principle of holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips.

We must praise God upon every remembrance of him. Now that David was shut out from public ordinances, he abounded the more in secret communion with God, ver. 6. Thoughts of God were ready to him. This subject should first offer itself, as that which we cannot overlook. And they were fixed in Him. Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts, passing through the mind, but abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind.

David was now wandering and unsettled; but wherever he came, he brought his religion along with him. David was now full of care all day, shifting for his own safety, so that he had scarcely leisure to apply solemnly to religious exercises, but rather than want time for them, he denied himself his necessary sleep. He was now in continual peril of his life, care and fear held his eyes waking, and gave him wearisome nights; but he comforted himself with thoughts of God. When sleep departs through pain or sickness of body, or any disturbance in the mind, our souls, by remembering God, may be at ease. Perhaps an hour's pious meditation will do us more good than an hour's sleep would have done: see 16. 7; 17. 3; 4. 4; 119. 62.

The mercies of God, when thus called to mind in the night watches, become a delicious repast to the soul, giving songs in the night, and making darkness itself cheerful. How cheerful then will be that last morning, when the believer, awaking up after the Divine likeness, shall be satisfied with all the fulness of God, and praise him with joyful lips, in those eternal courts, where there is no night, and from whence sorrow and sighing flee away.—(32.)

Ver. 7—11. David, having expressed his desires toward God, and his praises of him, here speaks his confidence in him, and his joyful expectations from him.

To mount with David towards heaven in such devotion, should be our earnest endeavour. True Christians can, in some measure, and at some times, appropriate his emphatic language; but too commonly our souls cleave to the dust. Let us then be instant in prayer, that we may be quickened according to his word of promise. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil.

Recollection of past mercies inclines the soul to put herself under the wing of an all-shadowing Providence. Should the Redeemer for a time seem to desert her, faith constrains her to follow hard after, as a child doth after its father; and not to let go the hand which has so often upheld her from falling.—(32.)

God upheld him in his holy desires and pursuits, that he might not grow weary in well doing. Those that follow hard after God, would soon fail, if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is he that strengthens us in the pursuit, quickens our good affections, and comforts us while we have not yet attained what we are in the pursuit of. This was a great encouragement to the psalmist to hope that God would, in due time, give him that which he so earnestly desired, because he had by his grace wrought in him those desires, and kept them up.

There were those that sought his soul to destroy it; not only his life, but his soul, excluding him from God's ordinances; these are the nourishment and support of the soul; they did what they could to starve it; and by sending him to serve other gods, they did what they could to poison it, 1 Sam. 26. 19. But he foresaw the end of his persecutors; falling by the sword, they would be food for wild animals. He foresaw himself as advanced upon the throne to be the king of Israel; rejoicing in God, not in his outward dignity, or in the ruin of his enemies; while every one who swore allegiance to him, or who, as worshippers of God, swore with solemnity by his name, would glory in his advancement, and all his revilers would be silenced. Such will be the doom of Christ's enemies, that oppose his kingdom in the world; Bring them forth, and slay them before me, Luke 19. 27.

He calls himself the king, because he knew himself to be so in the Divine purpose and designation; thus Paul, while yet in the conflict, writes himself more

than a conqueror, Rom. 8. 37. Believers are made kings, though they are not to have the dominion till the morning of the resurrection. He doubts not but that though he was now sowing in tears, he should reap in joy; The king shall rejoice. He resolves to make God the Alpha and Omega of all his joys; he shall rejoice in God. Now this is applicable to the glories and joys of the exalted Redeemer. Messiah the Prince shall rejoice in God; he is already entered into the joy set before him, and his glory will be completed at his second coming.

His advancement would be the consolation of his friends. All good people, that make a sincere and open profession of God's name, shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's advancement. They that heartily espouse the cause of Christ, shall glory in its victory at last.

Christ's enemies, those that speak lies to him, as all hypocrites do, that tell him they love him, while their hearts are not with him, the mouths of those also that speak lies against him, that pervert the right ways of the Lord, and speak ill of his holy religion, will all be stopped, in that day when the Lord shall come to reckon for all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Christ's second coming will be the everlasting triumph of all his faithful friends and followers, who may therefore now triumph in the believing hopes of it.

Blessed Lord, let our desire be increasing every hour towards thee; let our love be always upon thee; let all our enjoyment be in thee, and all our satisfaction from thee. Be thou all in all to us while we remain in the present wilderness state, and bring us home to the everlasting enjoyment of thyself for ever.—(37.)

10. Foxes, or rather the jackals.

PSALM LXIV.

This psalm has reference to David's enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; many such there were, and much trouble they gave him. (1.) He prays to God to preserve him from their malicious designs against him, ver. 1, 2. He gives a character of them, as men marked for ruin by their own wickedness, ver. 3—6. (2.) By the spirit of prophecy he foretells their destruction, which would redound to the glory of God, and the encouragement of his people, ver. 7—10. From this psalm

we observe the effect of the old enmity that is in the Seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent; and assure ourselves that the serpent's head will be broken at last, to the honour and joy of the holy seed.

Ver. 1—6. The psalmist earnestly begs of God to preserve him, ver. 1, 2. Preserve my life from fear, not only from what I fear, but from the disquieting fear of it; this is, in effect, the preservation of the life, for fear has torment, particularly the fear of death, by reason of which some are, all their life-time, subject to bondage.

He complains of the great malice and wickedness of his enemies. They are very spiteful in their calumnies and reproaches, ver. 3, 4. Their tongues are their swords, with which they wound and kill the good name of their neighbour. The tongue is a little member, but it boasts great things, Jam. 3. 5. It is a dangerous weapon. Bitter words are their arrows. Scurrilous reflections, opprobrious names, false representations, slanders and calumnies, the fiery darts of the wicked one, set on fire of hell. The upright man is their mark, and they cannot speak peaceably either of him or to him. They manage it with art and subtilty. There is no guard against a false tongue. Herein they fear not; they are confident of success, and doubt not but by these methods they shall gain their point. Or, rather, they fear not the wrath of God, which will be the portion of a false tongue.

They are very secret and very resolute in their malicious projects, ver. 5. It is bad to do wrong, but worse to encourage ourselves and one another in it; that is doing the devil's work for him. It is a sign that the heart is hardened to the highest degree, when it is thus fully set to do evil. It is the office of conscience to discourage men in an evil matter, but, when that is baffled, the case is desperate. They please themselves with a conceit that God takes no notice of their wicked practices; they say, Who shall see them? A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of all wickedness.

They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution, ver. 6. They either searched to find out some real or apparent iniquity that David had committed, to cover their malice in persecuting him, or they contrived new methods of perpetrating their crimes; evil

men dig up mischief. They are masters of all the arts of mischief and destruction, for the inward thoughts of every one of them, and their hearts, are deep and desperately wicked.

Ver. 7—10. The judgments of God would certainly come upon these malicious persecutors of David. God's arrows will hit surer, and fly swifter, and pierce deeper than theirs do, or can. They have many arrows, but they are only bitter words, and words are but wind; the curse causeless shall not come; but God has an arrow, his curse which is never causeless, and therefore shall come; their wound by it will be a surprise upon them, because they were secure and not apprehensive of any danger. When God brings those mischiefs upon men which they have imprecated upon others, it is weight enough to sink a man to the lowest hell. They that love cursing, it shall come unto them.

Observe the influence which these judgments should have upon others. Their neighbours shall shun them; they shall flee away, for fear of partaking in their plagues, and being involved in their ruin, Numb. 16. 27; 1 Sam. 31. 7.

Spectators shall reverence the providence of God therein, ver. 9. They shall understand and observe God's hand in all; and unless we do so, we are not likely to profit by the dispensations of Providence, Hos. 14. 9. There is need of consideration and serious thought rightly to take the matter of fact, and need of wisdom to put a true interpretation upon it. God's doing is well worth our considering, Eccl. 7. 13, but it must be considered wisely. They shall be affected with awe of God, upon the consideration of it. All that have any thing of the reason of a man in them, shall fear and tremble because of God's judgments. They shall fear to do the like, fear being found persecutors of God's people. They shall declare the work of God; they shall speak to one another, and to all about them, of the justice of God in punishing persecutors; what we wisely consider ourselves, we should wisely declare to others, for their edification and the glory of God.

Good people shall, in a special manner, take notice of it, and it shall affect them with a holy pleasure, ver. 10. It shall increase their joy; The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow-creatures, but

glad that God is glorified, and his word fulfilled, and the cause of injured innocency pleaded effectually. It shall encourage their faith; they shall commit themselves to him in the way of duty, and be willing to venture for him with entire confidence in him. Their joy and faith shall be expressed.

It is our wisdom now to fear because of the judgments of God, and to flee from the wrath to come; to declare and consider his works, and to shun the rocks on which others have split. The righteous alone can rejoice and trust in this holy Lord God. All who uprightly rely on his mercy, and seek to know and do his will, shall glory in him as their salvation and eternal portion.

Not in men, nor in themselves, nor in any creature, or creature enjoyments, nor in their wisdom, strength, riches, or righteousness; but in Christ, in his wisdom, righteousness, and strength, in whom all the seed of Israel are justified and glory, and in what he is to them, and has done for them.—(27.)

10. The Targum paraphrases it, "and shall trust in his Word," either in his word of promise, or rather in his essential Word, Christ.—Gill.

PSALM LXV.

In this psalm we are directed to give to God the glory of his power and goodness, which appear, (1.) In the kingdom of grace, ver. 1. Hearing prayer, ver. 2. Pardoning sin, ver. 3. Satisfying the souls of the people, ver. 4. Protecting and supporting them, ver. 5. (2.) In the kingdom of Providence. Fixing the mountains, ver. 6. Calming the sea, ver. 7. Preserving the regular succession of day and night, ver. 8. And making the earth fruitful, ver. 9—13. For these blessings we are all indebted to God, and therefore we may easily apply this psalm to ourselves.

Ver. 1—5. The church of God waits for the accomplishment of his promises, and is prepared to render praises to him. All the praise the Lord receives from this earth is from Zion, being the fruit of the Spirit of Christ, and acceptable through his intercession.

"Praise waits," with an entire satisfaction in thy holy will, and dependence on thy mercy; when we stand ready in every thing to give thanks, then praise waits for God. Praise is silent unto thee, so the word is, as wanting words to express

the great goodness of God. As there are holy groanings which cannot be uttered, so there are holy adorings which cannot be uttered, and yet shall be accepted by Him that searches the heart, and knows what is the mind of the Spirit.

God reveals himself upon a mercy-seat ready to hear and answer the prayers of all who come unto him by faith in Jesus Christ. To him all flesh is invited to come by the gospel call, and all the inhabitants of the world shall become his worshippers. To him let us come boldly, he is a God that hears prayer.

For pardoning sin, who is a God like unto him? Micah 7. 18. By this he proclaims his name, Exod. 34. 7, and therefore praise waits for him, ver. 3. Our sins reach to the heavens, iniquities prevail against us, and appear so numerous, so heinous, that when they are set in order before us, we are ready to fall into despair. They prevail against us; we cannot pretend to balance them with any righteousness of our own: and yet, as for our transgressions, thou shalt, of thine own free mercy, and for the sake of a righteousness of thine own providing, purge them away, so that we shall not come into condemnation for them. The greater our danger is by reason of sin, the more cause we have to admire the power and riches of God's pardoning mercy, which can do away the threatening force of our manifold transgressions and sins.

The prevalence of sin damps the joy of believers, and discourages their worship on earth; but in the exercise of faith they look to Him who taketh away both the guilt and power of sin, and are thus animated to rejoice in and praise the Lord.

Those who attend upon him are blessed; not only blessed is the nation, 33. 12, but blessed is the man, the particular person, how mean soever, whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; he is a happy man, for he has the surest token of the Divine favour, and the surest pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss. Observe *what* it is to come into communion with God, in order to this blessedness. It is to approach to him by laying hold on his covenant, setting our best affections upon him, and letting out our desires toward him; it is to converse with him, as one we love and value; it is to be constant in the exercises of religion, and to apply ourselves closely to them as we do to that

which is the business of our dwelling-place. Observe *how* we come into communion with God; not recommended by any merit of our own, nor brought in by any management of our own, but by God's free choice. Whom he chooses he causes to approach; not only invites but inclines and enables them to draw nigh to Him. He draws them, John 6. 44.

They shall be satisfied. Here the psalmist changes the person; not, He shall be satisfied, the man whom thou chooseth, but, We shall; which teaches us to apply the promises to ourselves, by an active faith. There is abundance of goodness in God's house, righteousness, grace, and all the comforts of the everlasting covenant; there is enough for all, enough for each; it is ready, always ready; and all on free cost, without money and without price. In those things there is that which is satisfying to a soul, and with which all gracious souls will be satisfied; let them have the pleasure of communion with God, and that suffices them, they have enough, they desire no more.

Observe the glorious operations of his power on their behalf, ver. 5. God in his providence sometimes gives rebukes to his own people for the awakening and quickening of them, but always in righteousness: see Isa. 45. 15. But it is rather to be understood of his judgments upon their enemies, the recompense he renders to their proud oppressors, as a righteous God, and as the God that protects and saves his people.

By "wonderful things in righteousness," will the prayers of the church be answered at the second manifestation of the Son of God, in the glory of his Father.—(32.)

He takes care of all his people, however distressed, and whithersoever dispersed. He is the Confidence of all the ends of the earth, of all the saints all the world over, and not theirs only that were of the seed of Israel; for he is the God of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews. By faith and prayer we may keep up our communion with God, and fetch in comfort from him, wherever we are.

But it is only through that blessed One who was chosen to approach unto the Father, as our Advocate and Surety, that sinners may expect or can experience this happiness.

Ver. 6—13. Let us evermore trust the

power, truth, and love of the Lord, and submit to his righteousness. The strength which setteth fast the mountains, upholdeth the believer. That word which stilleth the stormy ocean, and speaks it into a calm, can silence the tumult and rage of our enemies.

The regular succession of day and night, ver. 8, is an instance of God's great power. Many were so afraid at these tokens, that they were driven to worship them, Deut. 4. 19, not considering they were God's tokens, undeniable proofs of his power and Godhead, therefore they should have been led by them to worship him. It is also an instance of God's great goodness, and so brings comfort to all. How contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, Gen. 1. 4, both are equally welcome to the world in their season; it is hard to say which is most welcome, the light of the morning, which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening, which befriend the repose of the night. Does the watchman wait for the morning? so does the labourer earnestly desire the shade of evening. Some understand it of the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in, and in which God was constantly honoured. We are to look upon our daily worship, both alone and with our families, to be the most needful of our daily occupations, and the most delightful of our daily comforts. If therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.

How much the fruitfulness of this lower part of the creation depends upon the influence of the upper, is easy to observe. If the heavens be as brass, the earth is as iron; which is a sensible intimation to a stupid world, that every good and perfect gift is from above. We must lift up our eyes to the heavens, where the original springs of all blessings are, out of sight, and thither must our praises return; as the first-fruits of the earth were in the heave-offerings lifted up towards heaven, by way of acknowledgment that thence they were derived. All God's blessings, even spiritual ones, are expressed by his raining righteousness upon us.

He who enricheth the earth, which is filled with man's sins, by abundant and varied bounty, can neither want power nor will to feed the souls of his people. We should then adore his power, seeing

it take vengeance on his enemies; we should rejoice in beholding it displayed in showing mercy.

We should, with wonder, gratitude, and praise, behold the abundance which, by the wise and kind providence of God, is diffused through the earth. While we see year after year crowned with the goodness of the Lord, so that the hills and valleys seem to rejoice in and proclaim their Maker's praise, let us remember our unworthiness, be thankful for our portion, and use it to the glory of the Giver.

These communications of God's goodness to this lower world drop not only upon the pastures of the inhabited land, but upon the pastures of the wilderness. The deserts, which man takes no care of, are under the care of the Divine Providence. The wilderness, which makes not such returns as the cultivated grounds do, receives the rain of heaven as well as the most fruitful soil; for God doeth good to the evil and unthankful.

These temporal mercies to us unworthy creatures shadow forth more important blessings. The rising of the Sun of righteousness, and the pouring forth of the influences of the Holy Spirit, that river of God, full of the waters of life and salvation, render the hard, barren, worthless hearts of sinners fruitful in every good work, and change the face of nations, more than the sun and rain change the face of nature. Wherever the Lord passes, by his preached gospel, attended by his Holy Spirit, his paths drop fatness, and numbers are taught to rejoice in and praise him. These blessings have already been extended to many nations that were far off; they will descend upon the pastures of the wilderness, that all the earth may hear and embrace the gospel, may bring forth abundantly those fruits of righteousness which are, through Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Manifold and marvellous, O Lord, are thy works, whether of nature or of grace; surely in wisdom and loving kindness hast thou made them all; the earth, in every sense, is full of thy riches.

PSALM LXVI.

This is a thanksgiving-psalm. All people are here called upon to praise God, (1.) For the general instances of his sovereign dominion and power in the whole creation, ver. 1—7. (2.) For the special

tokens of his favour to the church, his peculiar people, ver. 8—12. And (3.) the psalmist praises God for his own experiences of his goodness especially, in answering his prayers, ver. 13—20.

Ver. 1—7. The holy church throughout all the world is here called upon to lift up her voice in thanksgiving; to celebrate that Name which is above every name, and to make the praise of Jesus glorious, both by word and deed; that others may be led to glorify him in like manner.—(32.)

The psalmist calls upon all lands to praise God, he foretells that they shall do so. The everlasting gospel being sent forth, shall not return void, but shall bring all the earth to worship God, and sing unto him. We are here called upon to come and see the works of God; for his own works praise him; and we do not praise him more and better, because we do not duly and attentively observe them. God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as may justly fill us with amazement. God is terrible, that is, admirable in his works, through the greatness of his power. They are formidable to his enemies, and have many times forced them to submission, ver. 3. They are comfortable and beneficial to his people, ver. 6. The joys of our fathers were our joys, and we ought to look upon ourselves as sharers in them. They are commanding to all. God by his works keeps up his dominion.

The glorious perfections, and wonderful works of God should induce men in every land to delight in praising him, making his praise glorious. But nothing can do this effectually, except his effectual grace new create their hearts unto holiness; and in the redemption by the death of Christ, and the glorious deliverances of that event, they have more wondrous works to contemplate than Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

The universal worship, ver. 4, that will be yielded to Christ, will be in the latter day, when Christ shall be King over the whole earth, and his name, worship, and religion one, Zech. 14. 9, 16; Rev. 15. 4. The person, offices, kingdom, grace, and glory of Christ shall be the subject of their song.—(27.)

Ver. 8—12. In these verses, the psalmist calls upon God's people in a special manner to praise him. Let them make

the voice of his praise to be heard, ver. 8; from whom should it be heard, but from his people? We have to bless God for common protection, ver. 9. It is the good providence of God, that keeps life and soul together, and his visitation that preserves our spirit; he puts our soul in life; so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a continued creation. To him we owe it that we have not, long ere this, fallen into endless ruin.

Also we have to bless God for special deliverance from great distress. Observe how grievous the distress and danger, ver. 11, 12. The Lord not only preserves our temporal life, but maintains the spiritual life which he has communicated to believers. He will not suffer their feet to be moved, to their utter casting down, by any difficulties of their paths, or assaults of their enemies. Yet he will try their faith in the furnace of affliction, as silver is tried, that it may be proved genuine, and further purified. His wisdom, power, and love are to be trusted. Through various conflicts and troubles the slave of Satan escapes from his yoke, and obtains joy and peace in believing—through much tribulation the believer must enter into the kingdom of God.

Thou, O God, hast proved us, and tried us, ver. 10. We are likely to get good by our afflictions, when we look upon them under this view, for then we may see God's grace and love, and our own honour and benefit in them. By afflictions we are proved as silver in the fire. The issue is glorious at last. The troubles of the church will certainly end well. God brings his people into trouble, that their comforts afterward may be the sweeter, and that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place.

Ver. 13—20. The sacrifice of the death of Christ hath superseded the legal oblations wherewith the ancient believers outwardly expressed their gratitude; we are to offer continually the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, presenting our bodies and souls a living sacrifice unto the Lord, doing good unto all as we have opportunity. We should especially declare unto those that fear God, what he hath done for our souls, and how he hath

heard and answered our prayers, inviting them to join us in prayer and praise; this will turn to our mutual comfort, and to the glory of God.

But we cannot share these spiritual privileges if we retain the love of iniquity in our hearts, though we refrain from the gross practice of it. If one professing godliness regard iniquity as a man regards a welcome visitant; if he gladly admits it into the thoughts and desires of his heart, taking pleasure in it, and reluctant to part with it, it is hypocrisy; the Lord hears not the prayer of dissemblers.

Though it be but a heart sin that is thus countenanced and made much of, if we delight in it after the inward man, God will not hear our prayer, will not accept it, or be pleased with it, nor can we expect an answer of peace to it. Iniquity, regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. They that continue in love and league with sin, have no interest either in the promise or in the Mediator, and therefore cannot expect to speed in prayer. But if the feeling of sin in the heart causes uneasiness, and desire to be rid of it; if it be the presence of an intruder, one urging a demand we know we must not, cannot comply with, this is an argument of sincerity.

When we pray in simplicity and godly sincerity, our prayers will be answered. This will turn unto us for a testimony, increasing our sense of the Lord's love to us, and exciting gratitude to him who hath not turned away our prayer nor his mercy from us. Mercies, in answer to prayer, in a special manner, oblige us to be thankful. He has not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy. Lest it should be thought that the deliverance was granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God's mercy. This he adds, It was not my prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it. Therefore God does not turn away our prayer, because he does not turn away his own mercy, for that is the foundation of our hopes, the fountain of our comforts; and therefore ought to be the matter of our praises.

15. Or, rams with incense. The incense typifies Christ's intercession, without which the latest of our sacrifices will not be accepted.—*Henry.*

18. If I have, or had seen, or looked upon, that is, with approbation or affection. Men look upon what they like, and turn away their face from what they loath or hate.—*Poole.*

PSALM LXVII.

In this psalm is a prayer for the prosperity of the church of Israel, ver. 1. A prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church, ver. 2—5. A prospect of happy and glorious times, when God shall do this, ver. 6, 7. Thus was the psalmist carried out by the spirit of prophecy to foretell the glorious estate of the christian church, in which Jews and Gentiles should unite into one flock; the beginning of which blessed work ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, and the completing of it, of our prayer and hope.

We are here taught that all our happiness comes from God's mercy; and therefore the first thing prayed for, is, God be merciful to us, to us sinners, and pardon our sins, Luke 18. 13. It is conveyed by God's blessing, and secured in that. It is completed in the light of his countenance. May God by his grace qualify us for his favour, and then give us the tokens of his favour. If we by faith walk with God, we may hope that his face will shine with us.

He passes from this to a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles; Lord, I pray not only that thou wilt be merciful to us and bless us, but that thou wilt be merciful to all mankind, that thy way may be known upon earth. These verses, which point at the conversion of the Gentiles, may be taken as a prayer; and so it speaks the desire of the old testament saints; they desired the laying open their advantages. And as a prophecy; that it shall be as he here prays. Many scripture prophecies and promises are wrapt up in prayers, to intimate, that the answer to the prayer of the church is as sure as the performance of God's promises.

With reference to the Gentiles, he prays,

1. That Divine revelation might be sent among them, ver. 2. They that have themselves experimentally known the pleasantness of God's ways, and the comforts of his salvation, cannot but desire and pray that they may be known to others, even among all nations.

2. That Divine worship may be set up among them, as it will be where Divine revelation is received and embraced, ver. 3, 5. They that delight in praising God themselves, cannot but desire that others,

also may be brought to praise him. And that they might be converted and brought into the church. Then they would be disposed to praise the living and true God.

3. That the Divine government may be acknowledged and cheerfully submitted to, ver. 4. The joy he wishes to the nations, is, holy joy. Let them be glad that the kingdom is the Lord's, 22. 28. That by the kingdom of his providence he shall overrule the affairs of kingdoms, according to the counsel of his will, though they neither know him nor own him; and that he shall disciple all nations by the preaching of his gospel, Matt. 28. 19, and set up the kingdom of his grace among them upon the ruin of the devil's kingdom. That he shall make them a willing people in the day of his power, and even the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of the Lord, and of his Christ.

He concludes with a joyful prospect of all good when God shall do this, when the nations shall be brought to praise God. Then shall the earth yield her increase, ver. 6. The success of the gospel sometimes brings outward mercies along with it; righteousness exalts a nation: see Isa. 4. 2; 62. 9. They shall have the favours of the upper world, which are much better. Those who through grace call God their own, may with humble confidence expect blessings from him. The blessing of God sweetens all our creature-comforts to us, and makes them comforts indeed. We receive the increase of the earth as a mercy indeed, when with it God, even our own God, gives us his blessing.

All the world shall hereby be brought to do like them. When the gospel begins to spread, it shall get ground more and more, till it reach to the ends of the earth. It is good to cast in our lot with those that are the blessed of the Lord.

The coming of the promised Saviour was the great blessing which a merciful God had engaged to bestow on the ancient church. This salvation was sent to the Jews, that by them it might be preached to the Gentiles; that the way of peace might be known upon earth, and the remedy which God had devised to restore the souls of men might be sent to all nations. We have, therefore, still need to pray that our own God would be merciful to his church, and bless it with increasing knowledge, purity, and love; that every thing being removed which

tarnishes the beauty of the christian religion, or weakens the endeavours of christians to spread the gospel, his saving health may be diffused through all nations; that our Redeemer may establish his righteous kingdom over all mankind; that they may yield praise and glory to his name; and all the ends of the earth worship him in reverence and godly fear.

If nothing had been spoken in scripture respecting the conversion of the heathen, we might think it vain to attempt so hopeless a work. But when we see how continually this subject is brought forward in the scriptures, and with what confidence it is declared, we should make no account of difficulties, since with God all things are possible. We may engage in missionary labours, assured that God will fulfil his own word, and crown our endeavours with success. And shall we be backward to impart to the heathen the knowledge with which we are favoured, and the salvation we profess to glory in? It is obvious they cannot learn unless they be taught, "Nor can they hear without a preacher." Then let not difficulties dismay us, but let us go forward in the strength of the Lord, and look to him to accompany the word with the Holy Ghost; then may we hope that Satan's kingdom shall be destroyed, and the promised kingdom of our Redeemer established on its ruins.—(61.)

PSALM LXVIII.

David probably penned this psalm when God had given him rest from his enemies, and he had brought the ark, which was both the token of God's presence, and a type of Christ's mediation, to the tent he had pitched for it in Zion; for the first words are the prayer which Moses used at the removing of the ark, Numb. 10. 35. From this he is led, by the Spirit of prophecy, to speak glorious things concerning the Messiah, his ascension into heaven, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world. He begins with prayer, ver. 1—3. He then suggests many things as matter for praise. (1.) The greatness and goodness of God, ver. 4—6. (2.) The wonderful works God had wrought for his people, bringing them through the wilderness, ver. 7—8, settling them in Canaan, ver. 9, 10, giving them victory over their enemies, ver. 11, 12, and delivering them out of the hands of their oppressors, ver. 13,

14. (3.) The special presence of God in his church, ver. 15—17. The ascension of Christ, ver. 18, and the salvation of his people by him, ver. 19, 21. (4.) The victories which Christ would obtain over his enemies, and the favours he would bestow upon his church, ver. 22—28. (5.) The enlargement of the church by the accession of the Gentiles, ver. 29—31. (6.) And concludes the psalm with an humble acknowledgment of the glory and grace of God, ver. 32—35.

Ver. 1—6. In these verses, David comments upon Moses's prayer. And, it looks further, to the Redeemer's victory, for he was the angel of the covenant, who guided Israel through the wilderness. If God but arise, all his impenitent enemies will speedily be scattered; none ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. But God is the joy of his people, let them rejoice whenever they come before God.

He praises God as a great God, infinitely great, ver. 4. He is Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient Being, the fountain of all being, power, motion, and perfection; this is his name for ever. He who derives his being from none, but gives being to all, is engaged by promise and covenant to bless his people, who therefore should rejoice in him. He is to be praised as a gracious God, a God of mercy and tender compassion. He is great, but he despises not the meanest, ver. 5, 6. Observe how much God's goodness is his glory. He ever careth for the afflicted and oppressed; poor sinners, helpless and exposed more than any fatherless children, are admitted into his family, and share all the blessings of that relation. All his people were once bound in Satan's chains. The calling of the Gentiles, the casting out the rebellious Jews, the conversion of sinners, with the destruction of the impenitent seem here represented.

4. "In JAH is his name, therefore exult before him." This is an emphatic assertion of Christ's divinity, introduced here to justify and enforce the worship enjoined.—*Horsley*.

Ver. 7—14. The psalmist here praises God for what he had done for their fathers in the days of old. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies, and revive our grateful sense of them.

God's Israel, having him for their leader, marched through the wilderness, and were not lost in it. If God bring his

people into a wilderness, he will be sure to go before them in it, and to bring them out of it, Cant. 8. 5.

He manifested his glorious presence with them at mount Sinai. This terrible appearance of the Divine Majesty, as it would possess them with a fear and dread of him, so it would encourage their faith in him, and dependence upon him. Whatever mountains of difficulty lay in the way of their happy settlement, he that could move Sinai could remove them.

He provided for them both in the wilderness and in Canaan. The daily showers of manna seem here to be meant. It looks further, to the spiritual provision made for God's Israel; the Spirit of grace and the gospel of grace are the *plentiful* rain, with which God confirms his inheritance, and from which their fruit is found, Isa. 45. 8. Christ himself is this rain, 72. 6; He shall come as showers that water the earth.

He often gave them victory over their enemies. The Lord was Israel's instructor and king. He raised up prophets, even women, to deliver his words, and captains to fight his battles; such as went not forth to fight shared the advantages and celebrated the victories. Thus when the Redeemer gave the command to preach to all nations, numbers were raised up to publish it; and multitudes share the blessings who are not exposed to their persecutions. This account of Israel's victories is applicable to the victories obtained by the exalted Redeemer for those that are his, over death and hell. By the resurrection of Christ our spiritual enemies were made to flee, and they were for ever disabled from hurting any of God's people.

From a low and despised condition, they had been advanced to splendour and prosperity. Israel in Egypt among the kilns appeared very mean and wretched, but possessed of Canaan, during the reigns of David and Solomon, they appeared glorious, as snow glistening on the top of Salmon. Thus the slaves of Satan, when converted to Christ; when justified and sanctified by him, look comely and honourable. When they reach heaven, all remains of their sinful state shall disappear, and they shall be as the wings of the dove, covered with silver, and her feathers as gold. Complete salvation shall render those white as snow in Salmon, who once were mean and loathsome through the guilt and defilement of sin.

14. Salmon was a mountain in Judea.

Ver. 15—21. David, having given God praise for what he had done for Israel in general, as the God of Israel, ver. 8, here gives him praise as Zion's God in a special manner. Bashan was a high hill, but not the chosen residence of Jehovah. Zion was the hill of God, the type of his church, in which he will dwell for ever.

He compares it with mount Sinai, and shows that it has the Shechinah or Divine presence in it, as really as Sinai itself had, ver. 17. Angels are the chariots of God. The enemies David fought with, had chariots, 2 Sam. 8. 4, but what were they, for number or strength, to the chariots of God? Our Lord Jesus has them at command; when the First Begotten was brought into the world, it was with this charge, Let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. 1. 6; they attended him upon all occasions, and he is now among them, angels, principalities, and powers being made subject to him, 1 Pet. 3. 22.

The glory of mount Zion was the King whom God set on that holy hill. When the ark was placed upon mount Zion, the tabernacle was enriched with spoils of the vanquished nations. But the ascension of Christ must here be meant, and thereto it is expressly applied, Eph. 4. 8. When he ascended into heaven, he led captive Satan, sin, and death, which had held all men in captivity; and he received as the purchase of his death all those gifts which were needful for the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of believers. These he continually bestows on those for whom he received them, even for rebellious men, that the Lord God might dwell among them, as their Friend and Father.

He gave gifts to men, so the apostle reads it, Eph. 4. 8. For he received that he might give; on his head the anointing of the Spirit was poured, that from him it might descend to the skirts of his garments. And he gave what he had received; having received power to give eternal life, he bestows it upon as many as were given him, John 17. 2. Thou hast received gifts for men, not for angels; fallen angels were not to be made saints. Not for Jews only, but for all men; whoever will, may reap the benefit of these gifts. Thou hast received gifts in man; so the margin; that is, in the human nature which Christ was pleased to clothe himself with, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertain-

ing to God. In him, as Mediator, all fulness dwells, that from his fulness we might receive.

To magnify the kindness and love of Christ to us in receiving these gifts for us, the psalmist observes, he received them for the rebellious also, for those that had been rebellious; so all the children of men had been in their fallen state. This magnifies the grace of Christ exceedingly, that through him rebels are, upon their submission, not only pardoned, but preferred. Christ came to a rebellious world, not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved. The gracious intention of Christ's undertaking, was, that he might dwell with them, and they be living temples to his praise, Ezek. 37. 27.

The glory of Zion's King, is, that he is a Saviour and Benefactor to all his willing people, and a consuming fire to all those that persist in rebellion against him, ver. 19—21. They that take God for their God, and give up themselves to him to be his people, shall be loaded with his benefits, and to them he will be a God of salvation. Blessed be the Lord, for it is owing to the mediation of Christ, that we live, and are daily loaded with benefits. So many, so weighty are the gifts of God's bounty, that he may be truly said to load us with them. He that daily loads us with benefits, will not put us off with present things for a portion, but will be the God of our salvation. But has he power to complete this salvation? Yes, certainly, for unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. The keys of hell and death are put into the hand of the Lord Jesus, Rev. 1. 18. He has both authority and power to rescue those that are his, from the dominion of death, by altering the property of it, to them when they die, and giving them a complete victory over it when they shall rise again; for the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. They that persist in their enmity to him, will certainly be ruined, ver. 21. Those who go on still in their trespasses, and hate to be reformed, God looks upon as his enemies, and will treat them accordingly. The complete salvation of his church will be accompanied with the final ruin of the serpent's seed. The crown of the head, the chief pride and glory of the enemy, shall be smitten; Christ shall crush the head of the serpent.

Ver. 22—28. The Lord had promised

to save Israel from their enemies by the hand of David; he would therefore renew the wonders he wrought in the land of Bashan, and at the Red Sea. The ascension of Christ made way for most signal displays of the Lord's power in spreading the gospel; and the more glorious prevalence of christianity shall be attended with the destruction of anti-christian opposers.

The victories with which God blessed David's forces over the enemies of Israel, are types of Christ's victory over death and the grave, for himself and for all believers, in his resurrection, and theirs by virtue of his; and of the destruction of the enemies of Christ and his church.

What then is required of us? That we observe his motions, ver. 24. See here how an active faith appropriates God. Those who thus take him for theirs, may see him, in all his out-goings, acting as their God, as their King, for their good, and in answer to their prayers. And see where God's most remarkable out-goings are; even in the sanctuary, in and by his word and ordinances; and among his people in the gospel-church especially, in and by which is made known the manifold wisdom of God. What is our duty in reference to these out-goings? That we give him glory in the most devout and solemn manner.

Let those that are immediately employed in the service of the temple, praise him, ver. 25. Thus when Christ is gone up to heaven, the apostles shall celebrate and publish it to all the world, and even the women that were witnesses of it, shall join them. Let all the people of Israel in their solemn religious assemblies give glory to God; and let those among them who, upon any account, are the most eminent, and make a figure, go before the rest in praising God, ver. 27. Not only the rulers of the tribes near Jerusalem attended on this occasion, but those who were most remote. The kingdom of the Messiah shall be submitted to by all the potentates and learned men in the world.

The people seem to have addressed the king, ver. 28. The Lord had commanded all this to strengthen his interests, and they prayed that he would establish what he had, by him, wrought for his people. The words are applicable to the Redeemer, to his church, and to every true believer. Some make this verse to be a believer's address to the Messiah. Thy God, God the Father, has made thee strong for

himself, has treasured up strength in thee for us; therefore we pray, that thou, O God the Son, wilt strengthen what thou hast wrought for us, wilt accomplish thine undertaking for us, by finishing thy good work in us.

Ver. 29—31. Observe the powerful invitation given to those that are without, to join the church. This was in part fulfilled by the proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon; but was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, the making of them fellow-heirs, and of the same body, with the seed of Israel, Eph. 3. 6. Some shall submit for fear, ver. 30. Lord, rebuke them, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices, till, conquered by the convictions of their consciences, and the checks of Providence, every one is brought to make peace with the church.

Others will submit willingly, ver. 29, 31. There is that in God's temple; that beauty and benefit in the service of God, in communion with him, and in the gospel of Christ which went forth from Jerusalem, which is enough to invite. He mentions Egypt and Ethiopia, two countries out of which subjects and supplicants were least to be expected. Out of all nations some shall be gathered in to Christ.

30. *Morrison* says, that after consulting a great variety of readings, he is disposed to adopt the following; "Humble the wild beast of the reeds—the assembly of heroes who boast themselves in the calves of the nations—in pieces of silver; scatter thou the people that delight in war." He considers that the wild beast of the reeds may denote the king of Egypt, the old and inveterate enemy of Israel and of true religion. The psalmist's prayer is, that God would humble the cruel enemy of his church. He entreats also that the same ruin may overtake the princes and heroes of the earth, who pay homage to false gods. By the pieces of silver may be understood some splendid accompaniment of their worship, or those sordid riches which are the confidence of those that fight against God.

Ver. 32—35. The psalmist, having prayed for, and prophesied of the conversion of the Gentiles, here invites them to join with the devout Israelites in praising God, intimating that their accession to the church would be the matter of their joy and praise, ver. 32. Thine is the kingdom and power, and therefore, Thine is the glory. We must acknowledge his power in the kingdom of grace, and in the kingdom of providence. God is to be admired and adored with reverence and

godly fear by all those that attend him in his holy places. He will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. Out of heaven, his holy place above, he does, and will show himself a terrible God. Nor is any attribute of God more dreadful to sinners than his holiness.

The God of Israel is he that gives strength and power unto his people. All Israel's strength against their enemies came from God; they owned they had no might of their own, 2 Chron. 20. 12. And all our sufficiency for our spiritual work and warfare is from the grace of God. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and not otherwise; and therefore must have the glory of all we do, with our humble thanks for enabling us to do it, and accepting the work of his hands in us.

And let us not faint at difficulties, but accustom ourselves more to look at the power of God. Then we shall proceed with confidence and courage. Let the weak then say, "I am strong." Let them know in whom they have believed, that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him.—(61.)

PSALM LXIX.

David penned this psalm, when he was in affliction; in it, (1.) He complains of great distress and trouble, and earnestly begs of God to succour him, ver. 1—21. (2.) He imprecates the judgments of God upon his persecutors, ver. 22—29. (3.) He concludes with joy and praise, in an assurance that God would succour him, and would do well for the church, ver. 30—36. David may have composed this psalm when in great distress, with reference to his own case; but the Holy Ghost evidently spake of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed. This we should keep in view, and consider the Lord Jesus Christ as the speaker in this psalm.

Ver. 1—12. The psalmist compares himself, ver. 1—3, to a man sinking into the mire, while floods of water are going over his head. The sufferings of Christ from wicked men, from the powers of hell, and from Divine justice, while outward torments united with inward agony to increase his distress, are thus represented. We should frequently consider the Person of the sufferer here spoken of, and inquire wherefore, as well as what he suf-

fered, that, meditating on these scenes, we may be led to deeper humiliation for sin, clearer conviction of our danger, and the vanity of every dependence except on this great atonement; so that we may more fully perceive our infinite obligations to the Redeemer, and feel more lively gratitude and love, constraining us to live to his glory who died for our salvation. And it instructs us, when we are in affliction, to commit the keeping of our souls to God, that we may be neither soured with discontent, nor sink into despair.

David was indeed hated wrongfully, ver. 4; but the words were far more fully verified in Christ. In a world where unrighteousness reigns so much, we must not wonder if we meet with those that are our enemies wrongfully. Let us take care that we never do wrong, and then we may the better bear it if we receive wrong. Then I restored that which I took not away. Applying this to David, it was what his enemies compelled him to. It was what he consented to, that, if possible, he might pacify them. Sometimes this may become our duty. But applying it to Christ, it is a description of the satisfaction which he made to God for our sin by his blood; Then he restored that which he took not away; he underwent the punishment that was due to us, paid our debt, suffered for our offence.

His confessions of sin are very serious, ver. 5. Even when, as to men's unjust accusations, we plead, Not guilty, yet, before God, we must acknowledge ourselves to have deserved all that is brought upon us. This is the genuine confession of a penitent, who knows that he cannot prosper in covering his sin, and that it is his wisdom to acknowledge it, because it is open before God. All our sins take rise from our foolishness. They are all done in God's sight.

David prayed that pious Israelites might not be tempted to unbelief or despondency by witnessing his persecutions, ver. 6, 7. And the Son of David prayed that his disciples might not be offended by his cross. He foretold that their sorrow should be turned into joy.

David complains of the unkindness of his friends and relations, ver. 8. This was fulfilled in Christ, whose brethren did not believe on him, John 7. 5, who came to his own, and his own received him not, John 1. 11, and who was forsaken by his disciples, who had been as his brethren.

He complains of the contempt, and the reproach with which he was continually loaded, ver. 9—12. In this especially his complaint points at Christ, who for our sakes submitted to the greatest disgrace. Christ made satisfaction for us, not only by divesting himself of the honours due to an incarnate Deity, but by submitting to the greatest dishonours that could be done to any man.

The zeal of thine house has eaten me up, ver. 9, has made me do that which they wickedly turn to my reproach. They that hate thee and thy house, hate me, because they know how zealously affected I am to it.

We need not be discouraged if we are reproached and put to shame for the Lord's sake; if our zeal for the truths, precepts, and worship of God, should exasperate some, and cause others to turn godly sorrow, tenderness of conscience, deadness to the world, and even prayers for them, to derision and mockery.

Ver. 13—21. Whatever deep waters of affliction or temptation we are sinking into; whatever floods of trouble or ungodly men seem ready to overwhelm us, let us persevere in prayer, and in waiting upon our God to save us. The more men despise and desert us, the more earnest should be our cries unto the Lord to help and comfort us. This prayer contains the Redeemer's expectation, when his enemies threatened to overwhelm him; but he knew that his resurrection and exaltation would make way for fulfilling the design of his sufferings. He who brought the Redeemer from the grave, and exalted him, will hear those who come in his name; he will comfort them, and that speedily.

The tokens of God's favour to us, and the light of his countenance shining upon us, are enough to keep our spirits from sinking in the deepest mire of outward troubles, nor need we desire anything more to make us safe and easy.

To enforce these petitions, David pleads God's mercy and truth, ver. 13. There is mercy in God, a multitude of mercies, inexhaustible mercy, and hence we must take our encouragement in praying. If we think well of God, and continue to do so under the greatest hardships, we need not fear but God will do well for us; for he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy, 147. 11.

He pleads his own distress and afflic-

tion, ver. 17. He pleads particularly the reproach he was under, ver. 19, Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour. See what a stress is laid upon this. And if at any time we are called on to suffer reproach, and shame, and dishonour, for Christ's sake, this may be our comfort, that he knows it. The psalmist speaks the language of an ingenuous nature when he says, ver. 20, Reproach has broken my heart, I am full of heaviness; for it bears hard upon one that knows the worth of a good name, to be oppressed with a bad one; but when we consider what a favour it is to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus, Acts 5. 41, we shall see there is no reason why it should sit so heavy, or be any heart-breaking to us.

He pleads the insolence and cruelty of his enemies, ver. 18. One instance of their barbarity is given, ver. 21, They gave me gall for my meat, the word signifies a bitter herb, and is often joined with wormwood, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. This was literally fulfilled in Christ, and did so directly point to him, that he would not say, It is finished, till this was fulfilled, John 19. 28, 29. See how particularly the sufferings of Christ were foretold, which proves the scripture to be the word of God; and how exactly the predictions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which proves him to be the true Messiah. This is He that should come, and we are to look for no other.

The Lord Jesus, in the extremity of his sufferings, was forsaken by his disciples, and had none to take compassion on him, while insults and reproaches from every quarter aggravated his distress, ver. 20. The vinegar and the gall given to him were a faint emblem of that bitter cup which he exhausted, that we might drink the cup of salvation.

We cannot expect too little from men, miserable comforters are they all; nor can we expect too much from God, for he is the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort and consolation.

Ver. 22—29. These are not David's prayers against his enemies, but prophecies of the destruction of Christ's persecutors, especially the Jewish nation, which our Lord himself foretold with tears, and which was accomplished about forty years after the death of Christ. Depending on the sacrifices and institutions which were

originally appointed for the good of their souls, and ensnared in their own counsels, they persisted in their enmity to Christ, and in their resistance to the Romans. The two first verses of this paragraph are expressly applied to the judgments of God upon the unbelieving Jews, by the apostle, Rom. 11. 9, 10. The rejection of the Jews for rejecting Christ, as it was a signal instance of God's justice, and an earnest of the vengeance which God will take on all that are obstinate in their infidelity, was, and continues to be a convincing proof of the truth of the christian religion.

Many, besides the Jews, have had their table made their snare, and the things which should have been for their welfare made a trap for them, because they have opposed or neglected God's salvation. Or, when the supports of life and delights of sense, through the corruption of our nature, become an occasion of sin, and are made the food and fuel of our sensuality, then our table is a snare.

Their sin was, that they would not see, but shut their eyes against the light, loving darkness rather; their punishment was, that they should not see, ver. 23, but be given up to their own hearts' lusts which hardened them, and that the god of this world should be permitted to blind their minds, 2 Cor. 4. 4. There is a gracious terror, which opens the way to comfort, such as that of Paul, Acts 9. 6; but this is a terror that shall make the loins of sinners continually to shake, through horror of conscience.

Those who reject God's great salvation proffered to them, may justly fear that his indignation will be poured out upon them, ver. 24; for they that submit not to the Son of his love, will certainly be made the generation of his wrath.

Their habitation was desolate, ver. 25, when their country was laid waste by the Romans, and Zion, for their sakes, was ploughed as a field, Mic. 3. 12. Christ was he whom God had smitten, ver. 26, for it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he was esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, and they persecuted him.

Their way to ruin nothing should be put nor interpose to prevent, ver. 27. Those that are bad, if given up to their own hearts' lusts, will certainly be worse. If men will sin, God will reckon for it. But those that have multiplied to sin, may yet find mercy, through the righteousness of the Mediator; and therefore he adds, Let

them not come into thy righteousness, to receive the benefit of the righteousness of God, which is by faith in a Mediator, Phil. 3. 9. Not that God shuts out any from that righteousness, for the gospel excludes none that do not by their unbelief exclude themselves. But those that are so proud and self-willed, that they will not come into God's righteousness, shall have their doom accordingly; they themselves have decided it, they shall not come into his righteousness. Let those not expect any benefit by it, who are not willing and glad to be beholden to it. Let it appear that they were never written in the Lamb's book of life, ver. 28. Let them not be written with the righteous; let them not have a place in the congregation of the saints, when they shall all be gathered in the general assembly of those whose names are written in heaven, 50. 5.

Observe what the psalmist thinks of himself in the midst of all, I am poor and sorrowful, ver. 29. It is better to be poor and sorrowful, with the blessing of God, than rich and jovial, and under his curse. For they who come into God's righteousness, shall soon see an end of their poverty and sorrow, and his salvation shall set them up on high, which is the thing that David here prays for, Isa. 61. 10. This may be applied to Christ. He was, in his humiliation, poor and sorrowful, a man of sorrows, that had not where to lay his head; but God highly exalted him. Let us call upon God in the present acceptable time, without delay, and then, though poor and sorrowful, guilty and defiled, the salvation of God will set us up on high.

Ver. 30—36. The psalmist here, both as a type of Christ, and as an example to others, concludes a psalm with holy joy and praise, which he began with complaints and remonstrances of his griefs. Not only the atonement of the Redeemer, but the praises of the redeemed, who magnify the Lord with thanksgiving, are more pleasing to him than sacrificed bullocks.

This is a plain intimation that in the days of the Messiah an end should be put, not only to the sacrifices of atonement, but to those of praise and acknowledgment, which were instituted by the ceremonial law. Instead of them, spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are accepted; the calves of our lips, not the calves of the stall, Heb. 13. 15. It

is a great comfort to us, that humble and thankful praises are more pleasing to God than the most costly, pompous sacrifices.

He encourages others to rejoice in God, and continue seeking him, ver. 32, 33. They shall observe, to their comfort, the experiences of the saints, and the exaltation of the Saviour, for of him the psalmist had been speaking, and of himself as a type of him. The humble shall look to him, and be glad, and they that seek God through Christ shall live and be comforted.

He calls upon all the creatures to praise God; the heaven, and earth, and sea, and the inhabitants of each, ver. 34.

The praises of the world must be offered for God's favours to his church, ver. 35, 36. He will save all that are sanctified and set apart to him, all that employ themselves in his worship, and all those over whom Christ reigns; for he was King upon the holy hill of Zion. God will do great things for the gospel-church, in which let all that wish well to it rejoice. It shall be peopled and inhabited. The future conversion and restoration of the Jews may be here predicted. It shall be perpetuated. God will secure and raise up for himself a seed to serve him. The Redeemer shall see his seed, and prolong his days in them, till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the mystical body completed.

A seed shall serve him on earth, and his servants shall inherit his heavenly kingdom. They that love his name shall dwell before him for ever. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

It is indeed most blessed to see the Lord Jesus Christ the great Restorer of that which he took not away. By virtue of him only can we look up for acceptance now, or everlasting life hereafter. Hasten, Lord, in thine own time, deliverance to the true Jacob. Arise, thou great Restorer of the ancient places to dwell in, and turn away ungodliness from thy people. Bring Jew and Gentile into one fold, one church, one salvation, and reign thou, and rule thou the one glorious Lord, in thy kingdom of Zion for ever!—(37.)

PSALM LXX.

This psalm is almost word for word the same as the last five verses of Ps. 40. and it is written as a part of Ps. 71. in several

manuscripts. Both psalms appear to have been written by David during the rebellion of Absalom. See the remarks on Ps. 40. 13—17.

While here we behold Jesus Christ set forth in debasement, poverty, and distress; we also see him denouncing just and fearful punishment on his Jewish, heathen, and anti-christian enemies, and interceding for the joy and happiness of his friends, to his Father's honour. Let us find these things to our own troubled circumstances, and in a believing manner bring them and the sinful ones thereof to our remembrance. Urgent trials should always awake fervent prayers. (10.)

PSALM LXXI.

This psalm is well fitted for the use of the old disciples of Jesus Christ. The psalmist, (1.) Begins the psalm with believing prayers; with prayers that God would deliver him and save him, ver. 2, 4, and not cast him off; ver. 9, or be far from him, ver. 12; and that his enemies might be put to shame, ver. 13. He pleads his confidence in God, ver. 1, 3, 5, 7, his experience of help from God, ver. 6, and of the malice of his enemies against him, ver. 10, 11. (2.) He concludes the psalm with believing praises, ver. 14, &c. Never was his hope more established, ver. 16, 18, 20, 21. Never were his joys and thanksgivings more enlarged, ver. 15, 19, 22—24.

Ver. 1—13. David prays that he might never be made ashamed of his dependence upon God, nor disappointed in his believing expectations from him. With this petition every true believer may come boldly to the throne of grace; for God will never disappoint the hope that is of his own raising. We praise God, and so please him, by having and expressing an entire confidence in him. It is indeed honourable to the mercy of God that his word encourages a sinner to plead his confidence in him, as a reason why he should save and help him.

Those who are entirely satisfied with God's all-sufficiency, and the truth of his promise, and, in dependence upon that, as prepared to make them amends, are freely willing to do and suffer, to lose and venture for him, may truly say, In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. David's confidence in God is supported and encouraged by his experiences, ver. 5, 6. The consider-

ation of the gracious care of the Divine Providence in our birth and infancy, should engage us to early piety, and constant devotedness to his honour. He that was our Help from our birth, ought to be our Hope from our youth. If we received so much mercy from God before we were capable of doing him any service, we should lose no time when we are capable.

Yet let none expect ease or comfort from the world; even they who from their earliest youth have loved the Lord, and declared his wondrous works, and walked before him in truth, have often experienced sore troubles, have been exceedingly hated and persecuted, as men wondered at for their principles and conduct, Zech. 3. 8; but the Lord hath been their strong refuge. But although those who renounce present advantages, and expose themselves to present sufferings, who are joyful in poverty and distress, and cleave to the Lord in trials, are wondered at by the world, they find that he is a strong refuge, and will desire that their mouths may be filled with his praise and honour all the day long. They that love God, love to praise him, and desire to intermix with all they say something that may redound to the honour and praise of God. They resolve to do it while they live; they hope to do it eternally in a better world.

Observe, ver. 9, the natural sense the psalmist had of the infirmities of age, and the gracious desire he had of the continuance of God's presence with him under these infirmities. He would look upon himself as undone, if God should abandon him. To be cast off and forsaken of God is a thing to be dreaded at any time, especially in the time of old age, and when our strength fails us; for it is God that is the Strength of our heart. But it intimates that he had reason to hope God would not desert him; the faithful servants of God may be assured that he will not cast them off in old age, nor forsake them when their strength fails them.

He prays that his enemies might be ashamed of their designs against him. It is true, if God has forsaken a man, there is none to deliver him; but therefore to insult over him, ill becomes those who are conscious to themselves, that they deserve to be for ever forsaken of God. And He that seems to forsake for a small moment, will gather with everlasting kindness. David prayed from a spirit of prophecy.

Ver. 14—24. Observe how David's heart is established in faith and hope; it is good that the heart be so established.

He hopes in the power of God, ver. 16. I will go forth and go on, not in any strength of my own, but in God's strength; disclaiming my own sufficiency, and depending on him only as all-sufficient, in the strength of his providence, and in the strength of his grace. I will make mention of thy righteousness as my plea in prayer for thy mercy.

The psalmist declares that the righteousness of Christ, and the great salvation obtained thereby, shall be the chosen, the principal, the only subject of his discourse. Not on a sabbath only, but on every day of the week, of the year, of his life. Not merely at the stated returns of solemn devotion, but on every common occasion, in every social interview, all the day long. Why will he thus dwell, always dwell on this theme? Because he knew not the numbers thereof. It is impossible to measure the value, or exhaust the fulness of these blessings. The righteousness is unspeakable, the salvation everlasting. To compute the duration of the one, numbers fail; to describe the excellency of the other, words are wanting.—(31.)

As old age approaches, our strength fails in many respects; but God will not cast off his grey-headed servants when they are no longer capable of labouring as they have done. His people should act thus towards such as have spent their strength in their service. The Lord often strengthens his people with peculiar vigour in their souls, when nature is sinking into decay; that their strong faith, assured hope, abundant love and joy may show to all around them what a faithful Friend he is to his people. Let such a believer speak of the power, mercy, and truth of his God, and leave it upon record for them that are yet to come.

It is a debt which the old disciples of Christ owe to the succeeding generations, to leave behind them a solemn testimony to the power, pleasure, and advantage of religion, and the truth of God's promises.

The perfections and works of God are so exalted, that it is far above our ability to praise them worthily; he hath done great things, and there is none like him, ver. 19. But the everlasting righteousness which was brought in when the Redeemer had passed through his great and sore troubles, when he was brought again

from the depths of the earth, and exalted to the throne of glory, most demands our admiring gratitude and praise. Resting our hopes thereon, we may bear up under lesser trials, and even go down with confidence to the grave, ver. 20. For the Lord will receive the souls that he hath redeemed, and will quicken our bodies also, and raise them from the dust of the earth again; and thus increase our greatness, and comfort us on every side.

Anticipating this final deliverance and victory, let us here spend our days, while waiting the approach of death, in praising the Holy One of Israel with all our powers and attainments; and while speaking of his righteousness, and singing his praises, we shall rise superior to fears and infirmities, and have earnestness of the joys of heaven, ver. 22—24.

My lips shall rejoice, but that is nothing; the soul must be at work, and with all that is within us we must bless his holy name. Redeemed souls ought to be joyful, thankful souls. The work of redemption ought, above all God's works, to be celebrated by us in our praises. The Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God, must therefore be counted worthy of all blessing and praise. ✕

PSALM LXXII.

This is entitled a psalm for Solomon. But Christ's kingdom is prophesied of under the type and figure of Solomon's. David knew what the Divine oracle was, that from him, according to the flesh, God would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, Acts 2. 30. To him he here bare witness, and with the prospect of the glories of his kingdom he comforted himself in his dying moments, when he foresaw that his house would not be so with God, not so great, not so good as he wished. David, in spirit, (1.) Begins with a short prayer for his successor, ver. 1. (2.) He passes immediately into a long prediction of the glories of his reign, ver. 2—17. And, (3.) He concludes with praise to the God of Israel, ver. 18—20.

Ver. 1. This psalm belongs to Solomon in part and imperfectly, but to Christ more fully and clearly, many expressions leading the reader to contemplate Christ and his kingdom. This was the more necessary for the support and comfort of God's true Israel, because the Spirit of

God foresaw Solomon's dreadful apostasy, and the great calamities of his successors, and of the kingdom under their hands, and therefore fortified their hearts with the glorious condition which should be enjoyed under the Messiah, who should certainly come.—(54.)

We may apply verse 1 to Solomon. Solomon was both the king and the king's son, and his pious father ardently desired that the wisdom of God might be in him to do justice, that his reign might be a resemblance, as it was an evident type, of the kingdom of the Messiah. It is the prayer of a father for his child; a dying blessing. The best we can ask of God for our children is, that God will give them wisdom and grace to know and to do their duty; that is better than gold. Solomon learned to pray for himself as his father had prayed for him, not that God would give him riches and honour, but a wise and understanding heart. David had taught him good judgment and righteousness, yet that would not do unless God gave him his judgments. Parents cannot give grace to their children, but may by prayer bring them to the God of grace, and shall not seek him in vain. It is the prayer of a king for his successor. Those have little love either to God or man, who care not what becomes of the world and the church when they are gone. It is the prayer of subjects for their king, a psalm for the use of the people. Those who would live quiet and peaceable lives, must pray for kings and all in authority, that God would give them his judgments and righteousness.

We may apply it to Christ. It is a prayer of the Old Testament church for sending the Messiah, and we must thus hasten the second coming of Christ, when he shall judge the world in righteousness. It expresses the satisfaction all true believers take in the authority which the Lord Jesus has received from the Father.

Ver. 2—17. This is a prophecy of the prosperity and perpetuity of the kingdom of Christ; for there are many passages in it which cannot be applied to the reign of Solomon. There was indeed righteousness and peace at first in the administration of his government; but, before the end of his reign, there were both trouble and unrighteousness. The kingdom here spoken of is to last as long as the sun, but Solomon's was soon extinct. Even the Jewish

expositors understood it of the kingdom of the Messiah.

Let us observe the many great and precious promises here made, which were to have their full accomplishment only in the kingdom of Christ; though some were in part fulfilled in Solomon's reign.

1. It should be a righteous government, ver. 2. Isa. 11. 4. The world will be judged in righteousness, Acts 17. 31.

2. It should be a peaceable government, ver. 3. There shall be abundance of peace, ver. 7. Solomon's name signifies peaceable, and such was his reign. But peace is especially the glory of Christ's kingdom; it reconciles men to God, to themselves, and to one another, and slays all enmities; for he is our Peace. The poor in spirit, the broken-hearted penitents, apply for and obtain from him peace of conscience, and the peace of God that passeth understanding. As far as his kingdom is really set up, discord and contentions will cease, in families, churches, and nations.

3. That the poor and needy should be, in a particular manner, taken under the protection of this government, ver. 2. Those are God's poor, that are impoverished by keeping a good conscience, and those shall be provided for with distinguishing care. He has promised, in answer to their prayers, to help them; they, by prayer, commit themselves to him.

4. Proud oppressors shall be reckoned with, ver. 4. He shall take away their power to hurt, and punish them. This is the office of a good king. The devil is the great oppressor whom Christ will break in pieces, and of whose kingdom he will be the destruction; and he shall deliver the souls of his people from deceit and violence, ver. 14. He will deliver the needy, perishing sinner, that crieth to him, from the tyranny and oppression of Satan; he will spare him, though he deserve punishment, and save his soul from destruction. He will redeem him from the power of his enemies, and precious shall his blood be in his sight. Thus he becomes precious to the hearts of his people, and love constrains them to live devoted to his service and glory.

5. Religion shall flourish under Christ's government, ver. 5. Solomon built the temple, and the fear and worship of God was well kept up, for some time, under his government; but this must point at Christ's kingdom. Faith in Christ will set up, and keep up the fear of God; and there-

fore this is the everlasting gospel that is preached. The law of Christ, written in the heart, disposes men to be honest and just, and to render to all their due; it likewise disposes men to live in love; and so produces abundance of peace. Holiness and love shall be perpetual in Christ's kingdom, and shall never go to decay, for the subjects of it shall fear God as long as the sun and moon endure. Through all the changes of the world, and all the changes of life, Christ's kingdom will support itself.

6. Christ's government shall be very comfortable to all his faithful, loving subjects, ver. 6. He shall, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, come down like rain upon the mown grass; not on that which is cut down, but that which is left growing, that it may spring again. The gospel of Christ distils as the rain, which softens the ground that was hard, moistens that which was dry, and so makes it green and fruitful, Isa. 55. 10.

7. Christ's kingdom shall be extended, ver. 8. Solomon's dominion was very large, 1 Kings 4. 21, according to the promise, Gen. 15. 18. But it points to the universal monarchy of the Lord Jesus. His gospel has been, or shall be preached to all nations, Matt. 24. 14; and the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms, Rev. 11. 15, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. Before the Lord Jesus we must all either bow, or break: if we break, we are ruined; if we bow, we are certainly made for ever. He shall not only reign over them that dwell in the wilderness, the peasants and cottagers, but over them that dwell in the palaces, ver. 10. They shall present themselves to him; that is the best present we can bring to Christ, and without that no other present is acceptable, Rom. 12. 1. They shall offer gifts, spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, offer them to Christ as their God, on Christ as their Altar, which sanctifies every gift. Their conversion to God is called the offering up, or sacrificing of the Gentiles, Rom. 15. 16. All nations shall serve him; all shall be invited into his service; some of all nations shall come into it, and in every nation incense shall be offered to him, and a pure offering, Mal. 1. 11; Rev. 7. 9.

8. He shall be honoured and beloved by all his subjects, ver. 15. Presents shall be made to him. Though he needs neither the gifts nor the services of any,

yet he must be served with the best. They that have the wealth of this world, must serve Christ with it, do good with it. Honour the Lord with thy substance. Prayers shall be made for him, and that continually. The people prayed for Solomon, and that helped to make him and his reign so great a blessing. It is the duty of subjects to make prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for kings and all in authority, in concern for the public welfare. But how is this applied to Christ? He needs not our prayers. But the old testament saints prayed for his coming, prayed continually for it. They called him, He that should come. And now that he is come, we must pray for the success of his gospel, and the advancement of his kingdom; this is praying for him, and we pray for his second coming. It may be read, Prayer shall be made through him, or for his sake; whatsoever we ask of the Father, shall be in his name, and in dependence upon his intercession. Praises shall be made of him. All christians ought daily to praise Christ, for they owe their all to him, and to him they lie under the highest obligations.

9. Under his government there shall be a wonderful increase, both of the fruits of the earth and of the people, ver. 16. This is applicable to the wonderful produce of the seed of the gospel in the days of the Messiah. The good seed of his gospel, being as it were but a handful, sown upon the barren mountains of the Gentile world, hath already produced an immense increase of believers, fruitful in good works, to the glory of God, and the benefit of mankind, and they shall still increase more and more. The continual increase and abundant provision made for the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, seem to be here typified.

10. His government shall be perpetual, both to his honour, and to the happiness of his subjects. The Lord Jesus shall reign for ever, and of him only this must be understood, and not at all of Solomon. It is Christ only that shall be feared throughout all generations, ver. 5, and as long as the sun and moon endure, ver. 7. To the end of time, and to eternity, his name shall be celebrated; every tongue shall confess it, and every knee shall bow before it. The happiness of the people is universal too, it is complete, and everlasting; men shall be blessed, truly and for ever blessed in him. This plainly refers

to the promise made unto the fathers, that in the Messiah all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Gen. 12. 3. He shall crush the head of the great oppressor, and destroy all who withstand his cause.

The person and kingdom of Solomon have hitherto been used to convey a most illustrious prophecy concerning those of Christ. But here the type seems to be wholly absorbed in the great antitype. His name, his saving name, shall indeed endure for ever. In him, as promised to Abraham, shall all the true children of Abraham be blessed with the blessings of eternity; All nations shall call him blessed.—(32.)

3, 4. The mountains and the hills shall bring prosperity to the people; in righteousness he shall judge the poor of the people; he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.—*A. Clarke.* It is generally considered that the mountains and hills here figuratively denote persons in power. Some consider it refers to the prosperous state of the land. The two last words of ver. 3, *A. Clarke* makes the beginning of ver. 4; In righteousness he shall judge, &c.

Ver. 18—20. The psalmist here enlarges in thanksgivings for the prophecy and promise, ver. 18, 19. We must own that for all the great things God has done for the world, for the church, for the children of men, for his own children, in the kingdom of providence, in the kingdom of grace, for all the power and trust lodged in the hands of the Redeemer, God is worthy to be praised. We must stir up ourselves and all that is within us to praise him after the best manner, and desire that all others may do it. We are here taught to bless God in Christ, for all he has done for us by him. We must bless him as the God who only does wondrous things, in creation and providence, and especially the work of redemption, which excels them all.

David is earnest in prayer for the accomplishment of this prophecy and promise. It is sad to think how empty the earth is of the glory of God, how little service and honour he has from a world to which he is such a bountiful Benefactor. All that wish the honour of God, and the welfare of mankind, cannot but desire that the earth may be filled with the discoveries of his glory, suitably returned in thankful acknowledgments. We see how earnest David is in this prayer, and how much his heart is in it. He even shuts up his life with this prayer, ver. 20. Let God

be glorified, let the kingdom of the Messiah be set up, and maintained in the world, and I have enough, I desire no more. With this let the prayers of David the son of Jesse be ended; even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

May we, like David, submit to Christ's authority, and partake of his righteousness and peace! May we bless him for the wonders of redeeming love! May we spend our days, and end our lives, praying for the spread of his gospel, longing for the time when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen.

PSALM LXXIII.

This psalm gives an account of the conflict the psalmist had with a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of wicked people. (1.) He begins with a sacred principle, which he held fast, and by the help of which he kept his ground, ver. 1. He then tells us how he got into the temptation, ver. 2—14. (2.) How he got out of the temptation, and gained a victory over it, ver. 15—20. (3.) How he profited by the temptation, ver. 21—28. The experiences of others should be our instructions.

Ver. 1—14. The psalmist gives an account of a temptation he was strongly assaulted with—to envy the prosperity of the wicked; a common temptation, which has tried the graces of many saints. But he lays down, in the first place, the great principle which he is resolved to abide by, ver. 1. It is the goodness of God. This is a truth which cannot be shaken. Though we may not be able to reconcile all the disposals of Providence with it, we must believe they are reconcilable. Good thoughts of God will fortify against Satan's temptations. He had many thoughts concerning the providences of God, but this word, at last, settled him; For all this, God is good, good to Israel, even to them that are of a clean heart. Those are the Israel of God, that are of a clean heart, purified by the blood of Christ, inwardly sanctified by the Holy Spirit, cleansed from pollutions of sin, and entirely devoted to the glory of God.

The distinction between mere professors of religion and the true Israel of God has been obvious in every age, and it always has been laid down as a principle, that the Lord is kind to his true people, whose hearts are upright with

him. Yet appearances often have been against this truth. Satan has taken advantage in working upon the impatience and unbelief of godly persons, causing them to torment themselves, and dishonour God, by surmises and suppositions. The faith even of strong believers may sometimes be sorely shaken, and ready to fail. There are storms that will try the firmest anchors. Those that shall never be quite undone, are sometimes in their own apprehension gone.

Now let us take notice of what the psalmist was tempted with, and tempted to. He observed that foolish, wicked people have sometimes a very great share of outward prosperity. They seem to have the least share of the troubles and calamities of this life, ver. 5. They seem to have the greatest share of its comforts, ver. 7. They live without the fear of God, and yet they prosper and get on in the world. Not only are rich, but increase in riches, ver. 12. While others have much ado to keep what they have, they still add more.

Their end seems to be peace. It was thought to be the peculiar privilege of the godly, 37. 37, yet, to outward appearance, it is often the lot of the ungodly, ver. 4; There are no bands in their death. Wicked men often spend their lives without much sickness, and end them without great pain; while many godly persons scarcely know what health is, and die with great sufferings. Nay, they are not bound by the terrors of conscience in their dying moments; they are not frightened, either with remembrance of their sins, or the prospect of their misery, but die securely. We cannot judge men's state beyond death, by the manner of their death, or the frame of their spirits in dying.

He observed that they made a very bad use of their outward prosperity, and were hardened by it in their wickedness, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to fret at it.

He looked abroad, and saw many of God's people greatly at a loss, ver. 10. Because the wicked are so very daring, therefore his people return hither; they are at the same pause, that I am at; they know not what to say to it, and the rather, because they drink deep of the bitter cup of affliction, they lose not a drop of that unpleasant poison.

He felt himself under the continual frowns of Providence, while the wicked were in its smiles, ver. 14. His afflictions

were great; the returns of them were constant, and they continued without intermission. He spake feelingly when he spake of his own troubles; there is no disputing against sense, except by faith. The mischief which these prosperous infidels and scorners occasion in the world, must cause much grief to pious minds.

From all this arose a very strong temptation to cast off religion. Some that observed the prosperity of the wicked, comparing it with the afflictions of the righteous, were tempted to deny a Providence. In this sense some take ver. 11. Though the psalmist's feet were not so far gone, as to question God's omniscience, yet he was tempted to question the benefit of religion, ver. 13. See here what it is to be religious.

The true course of sanctification consists in the study of cleansing a man from all pollution, both of soul and body, or in cleansing the heart and hands, as it is here expressed. The heart is cleansed by the blood of Christ laid hold upon by faith; and by the begun works of the Lord's Spirit, manifested in the hearty resolution, purpose, and study of holiness, the hands are cleansed by a blameless course of life and actions.—(18.)

It is not in vain to do this; not in vain to serve God, and keep his ordinances; however the thing may appear now: when the pure in heart, those blessed ones, shall see God, Matt. 5. 8, they will not say that they have cleansed their hearts in vain.

10. This verse is very difficult to render. *Mudge* translates it, "Therefore let his people come before them, and waters in full measure would be wrung out from them." He considers that "waters in full measure" denote the suffering which the wicked are ready to inflict upon the godly when they have power to do so.

13. The Greek and other versions, have at the beginning of this verse, "Then I said."

Ver. 15—20. The psalmist having shown the progress of his temptation, next informs us how faith and grace prevailed against it. Though temptations may darken and perplex a godly man, and very rebellious thoughts may be stirred up, and corrupt nature may listen to Satan's darkest suggestions, yet there is a holy principle engrafted within, which will counteract and at length overcome them.

He kept up a respect for God's people, and with that he restrained himself from speaking what he had thought amiss, ver. 15. He got the victory by degrees, and this was the first point he gained. It is a

sign that we repent of the evil imagination of the heart, if we suppress it, and the error remains with ourselves. If thou hast been so foolish as to think evil, let it go no further, Prov. 30. 32. He would not speak it for fear of giving offence to those whom God owned for his children. There is nothing that can give more general offence to God's children, than to say that it is vain to serve God; for there is nothing more contrary to their universal experience, nor any thing that grieves them more, than to hear God thus reflected on. Those that wish themselves in the condition of the wicked, do, in effect, quit the tents of God's children.

He foresaw the ruin of wicked people; by this he baffled the temptation, as by the former he gave some check to it, ver. 16. He prayed to God to make this matter plain to him; and, at length, he understood the wretched end of wicked people; even in the height of their prosperity, they were rather to be pitied than envied, for they were but ripening for ruin. The sanctuary must be the resort of a tempted soul, for we never shall get ground against such temptations by human reasonings; we shall only find our minds perplexed with new difficulties, till we bring the whole matter, and weigh it in the balances of the sanctuary; then we shall judge righteous judgment; all is well, that ends everlastingly well; but nothing well, that ends ill, everlastingly ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable.

The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain, slippery places, ver. 18. Their prosperity is not built upon God's favour, or his promise. Their destruction is sure and sudden, and very great, ver. 19. It will surprise themselves and all about them. It is severe and very dreadful. It is a total, final ruin; They are utterly consumed with terrors. God will pour contempt upon their image, or fancied idea of happiness, when by death he awakes them to see that substantial good is forever lost, and real misery is eternal.

See, ver. 20, what their prosperity is; it is but a vain show, it is only a corrupt imagination, not substance, but a mere shadow; nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is as a dream, which may please us a little, while we are asleep, yet even then it disturbs our

repose. Who will envy a man the pleasure of a dream? The issue of it is, God will awake to judgment, to plead his own and his people's injured cause; and then God shall despise their image. How did God despise that rich man's image, when he said, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee! Luke 12. 19, 20.

17. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God,"—that is, till I entered into the secret grounds of God's dealings with mankind.—*Horsley.*

Or, till he had recourse to the Divine revelation.

Ver. 21—28. God would not suffer his people to be tempted, if his grace were not sufficient for them, not only to save them from harm, but to make them gainers by it.

The psalmist learned to think humbly of himself, and to abase himself before God, ver. 21, 22, for entertaining the temptation. If evil thoughts enter into the mind of a good man, they are grievous and painful to him; temptation was to Paul as a thorn in the flesh, 2 Cor. 12. 7. This particular temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is as painful as any other. In the reflection upon it, he owns it was his folly and ignorance to vex himself at this. Beasts mind present things only; if I had not been such, I should never have suffered such a senseless temptation to have prevailed over me so far. What! to envy wicked men upon account of their prosperity! To be ready to wish myself one of them, and to think of changing conditions with them! "So foolish was I." If good men, at any time, through the surprise and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act amiss; when they see their error, they will reflect upon it with sorrow, and shame, and self-abhorrence, Prov. 30. 2; Job 42. 5, 6. Thus David, 2 Sam. 24. 10.

He owned his dependence on, and obligations to the grace of God, ver. 23. This may refer to the care God had taken of him, and if he has thus maintained the spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, we ought not to complain, whatever calamities of this present time we have met with. Or, to his late experience of the power of Divine grace in carrying him through this strong temptation. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory over it, not to our own wisdom, but to the gracious presence of God with us, and the prevalency of Christ's intercession for us, that our faith may not fail; Thou hast holden me by my right hand, and so kept me from falling.

The same God who had delivered him from this evil work, would preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, ver. 24. All those who commit themselves to God, shall be guided with the counsel both of his word and of his Spirit, the best counsellors. All those who are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world, shall be received to his glory in another world; the believing hopes and prospects of which, will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by threatening temptations.

He was hereby quickened to cleave the closer to God. We have here the breathings of a sanctified soul toward God, and its repose in him; Whom have I in heaven but thee? There is scarcely a verse in all the psalms, more expressive of the pious and devout affections of a soul to God; it soars up toward him, follows hard after him, yet, at the same time, has entire satisfaction and complacency in him.

Our desire must be toward him, and our delight in him; we must delight in what we have of God, and desire what we further hope for. Our desires must not only be offered up to God, but they must all end in him; desiring nothing more than God, but still more and more of him. We must prefer him in our choice and desire before any other. God only can make us happy. We must desire nothing beside God, but what we desire for him; nothing but what we desire from him, and can be content without, so that it be made up in him.

Heaven itself could not make us happy without the presence and love of our God; much less can earth and all its possessions satisfy an immortal soul.

The world and all its glory vanishes; our flesh and hearts will soon fail, but God will be the strength of the hearts, and the portion for ever of his people. Others have experienced, and we must expect the failing both of flesh and heart. The body will fail by sickness, age, and death; when the flesh fails, the heart is ready to fail too; the conduct, courage, and comfort fail. But Christ Jesus, our Lord, proposes himself to be all in all to every poor sinner, who renounces all other portions and confidences.

By sin we are all far from God, ver. 27, and continuing at this distance, misery is inevitable. A profession of Christ, if we go on in sin, will increase our condemnation,

May we then choose that good part, which can never be taken from us; may we prefer those lasting riches, those holy pleasures, and that true honour which God bestows on his people. The saints choose God for their portion, they have him for their portion, and it is their happiness that he will be their portion; a portion that will last as long as the immortal soul lasts. May we draw near, and keep near to our God by faith and prayer; and find it good to do so. Let us put our trust in the Lord, then, being enabled to declare our experience of his love, patiently bearing our cross, and despising worldly objects, we may encourage our brethren to resist, and teach them to overcome the dangerous temptations of the enemy of souls. While we do so, let us not doubt that we shall have occasion to praise his name. Those that with an upright heart put their trust in God, shall never want matter for thanksgiving to him.

Blessed Lord, who hast so graciously promised to become our portion in the next world, prevent us from choosing any other in this.—(32.)

PSALM LXXIV.

This psalm appears particularly to describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, by the Chaldeans. The deplorable case of the people of God, at that time, is here spread before the Lord, and left with him. The psalmist, in the name of the church, (1.) Puts in complaining pleas of the miseries they suffered, for the quickening of their desires in prayer, ver. 1—11. (2.) He puts in comfortable pleas for the encouraging of their faith in prayer, ver. 12—17. (3.) He concludes with divers petitions to God for deliverances, ver. 18—23. Let us be affected with the former desolations of the church, for we are members of the same body, and apply it to present distresses.

Ver. 1—11. Observe what Israel pleads with God, now that they lay under the tokens and apprehensions of his wrath. They plead their relation to him; We are the sheep of thy pasture, thy peculiar people whom thou art pleased to set apart for thyself, and design for thine own glory. We are the rod, or tribe, of thine inheritance, whom thou hast been pleased to claim a special property in, above other

people, Deut. 32. 9. We are pleading for mount Zion, which has been the place of thy peculiar delight.

They plead the great things God had done for them. And if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was encouragement to hope that he would not cast them off, much more reason have we to believe that God will not cast off any whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood; but the people of his purchase shall be for ever the people of his praise. They plead the calamitous state that they were in. When the desolations of the sanctuary continued long, we are tempted to think they will be perpetual; but it is a temptation.

The Chaldeans rushing into the temple, and setting up their standards therein, seem to be described, ver. 4. The prevalence of infidelity, the triumphs of heathen antichristian persecutors, and corrupters of christianity, may be implied.

They complain of what their enemies have done against the sanctuary and the synagogues. The concerns of religion should lie nearer our hearts, and affect us more, than any worldly concern. They took pride in destroying the temple. Formerly, men thought it an honour to lend an hand to the building of the temple; now, they valued themselves upon destroying it, ver. 5, 6. Or, they break down the carved work of the temple, as woodcutters hew trees in the forest. They set fire to it, ver. 7. The Chaldeans burnt the house of God, 2 Chron. 36. 19. He complains of the desolations of the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, v. 8. There God's word was read and expounded, and his name praised and called upon. The constant sacrifices and observance of solemn feasts were signs of the Lord's presence that had ceased, ver. 9.

Infidels and persecutors may make grievous desolations; they may silence faithful ministers, and shut up places of worship, and say they will destroy the people of God and their religion together. For a season they may prosper in these attempts, but God's oppressed servants may complain that they see no prospects of deliverance, but there is a remnant of believers, the seed of a future harvest. They pray with fervent zeal for the glory of God, that he would not withdraw his hand, or delay his powerful interposition, but that he would pluck this right hand out of his bosom, to deliver the remnant of his people, and thus to vindicate his

honour. Such prayers have hitherto prevailed, and the despised church hath survived those who once triumphed over her. When the power of enemies is most threatening, it is comfortable to fly to the power of God.

9. This verse may describe their state at the beginning of the captivity, before they had the precise declarations as to its termination; or it may refer to their state after the death of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Many commentators apply it to the present dispersed state of the Jews.

Ver. 12—17. The lamenting church encourages herself, and silences her own complaints. Several things are here mentioned, which God had done for his people, as their King of old, which encouraged them to commit themselves to him, and depend upon him. He had divided the sea before them, when they came out of Egypt. He had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians; Pharaoh was the Leviathan, the Egyptians were the dragons, fierce and cruel. It was the Lord's doing, none besides could do it, and he did it with a strong hand and outstretched arm. This was typical of Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom, pursuant to the first promise, that the Seed of the woman should break the serpent's head. Or rather, this providence was food to their faith and hope, to support and encourage them in reference to the other difficulties they were likely to meet with in the wilderness. It was part of the spiritual meat which they were all made to eat of. God had dissolved the rock into waters. Let this never be forgotten, but let it especially be remembered, that the rock was Christ, and the waters out of it spiritual drink. He had congealed the waters into rock; Thou driedst up mighty, rapid rivers, Jordan particularly, at the time when it overflowed all its banks. He that did these things, could now deliver his oppressed people; he would do it, for his justice and goodness, his wisdom and truth, are still the same, as well as his power.

The God of Israel is the God of nature, ver. 16, 17. He that had power at first to settle, and still to preserve, the course of nature by the motions of the heavenly bodies, has certainly all power both to save and to destroy, and with him nothing is impossible. He that is faithful to his covenant as to the day and the night, will certainly make good his promise to his people, and never cast off those whom he has chosen, Jer. 31. 35, 36; 33. 20, 21.

His covenant with Abraham and his seed, is as firm as that with Noah and his sons, Gen. 8. 21. We have as much reason to expect affliction, as to expect night and winter. But we have no more reason to despair of the return of comfort, than we have to despair of day and summer. And in the world above we shall have no more changes; our sun shall no more go down.

Ver. 18—23. The psalmist here most earnestly begs that God would appear for the church against their enemies, and put an end to their present troubles. The cause of religion is God's own cause, and he will certainly plead it. It shall not be forgotten for ever, and the folly of such as revile his gospel and his servants will be visible to all.

The church reminds her Saviour of the endearing appellation by which he had called her in times past. This turtle dove, simple, defenceless, solitary, meek, timid, and mournful, was in danger from her inveterate enemies, who, like birds of prey, beset her on all sides. What force do these circumstances give to these words, ver. 19, Let us not fail in the hour of temptation to use them!—(32.)

The persecuted are God's covenant-people. This covenant in and with the Redeemer, engages far more extensive blessings than have been yet vouchsafed. Ere long the Jews shall be converted, the visible church purified, antichrist destroyed, and the fullness of the Gentiles called. This time approaches. Let us then call upon our God to have respect unto his covenant; to enlighten the dark nations of the earth which are filled with cruelty and wickedness; and to rescue his people from shame and dishonour, that the poor and needy may praise his name. Let us call upon him to arise and plead his own cause; and to silence the boastings and clamours of his enemies. This is our duty and our privilege, and all the prayers offered in this behalf will issue in praise and thanksgiving.

Blessed Saviour, thou art the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Break down and break through all the power of the enemy, and make thy people more than conquerors through thy grace helping them. Be thou, Lord, all in all to them in every situation and circumstance; for then thy poor and thy needy will never go away ashamed, but will sing aloud praises to thy name.—(37.)

PSALM LXXV.

(1.) The psalmist, with the church, gives thanks to God for the manifestation of his name, and the wonders wrought thereby, ver. 1. He declares his resolution of executing judgment and justice, ver. 2—5. (2.) He rebukes the wicked, and reminds them of the power, providence, counsels, and judgments of God, ver. 6—8, concluding with resolutions to praise God, break the power of wickedness, and establish righteousness, ver. 9, 10.—(32.)

Ver. 1—5. We often pray for mercy, when in pursuit of it; and shall we only once or twice give thanks, when we obtain it? Many works God does for his people, that may truly be called wondrous works, out of the common course, and quite beyond our expectation. These show that he himself is nigh to us in what we call upon him for.

The psalmist here engages that he will use his power well, pursuant to the trust reposed in him, ver. 2. Those that are advanced to posts of honour, must remember they are posts of service, and must set themselves with diligence and application of mind to the work to which they are called. Public trusts are to be managed with great integrity; they that judge, must judge uprightly.

His government would be a blessing to Israel, ver. 3. There was a general corruption of manners, and profaneness. They were in factions and parties, which was likely to issue in their ruin; but he hoped that when he had received the congregation, he should not only prevent the public ruin, but recover the public strength and beauty. This may well be applied to Christ and his government. The world and all the inhabitants of it were dissolved by sin, man's apostasy threatened the destruction of the whole creation; but Christ bore up the pillars of it, he saved the whole world from utter ruin, by saving his people from their sins, and into his hand the kingdom of providence is committed, Heb. 1. 3.

He checks those that opposed his government, ver. 4, 5. To the simple, the fools in Israel, that corrupted themselves, he said, Deal not foolishly; do not act so directly contrary both to your reason and to your interest as you do. Christ, the Son of David, gives us this counsel, issues out this edict, Deal not foolishly.

He who is made of God to us wisdom, bids us be wise, and not fools. To the proud daring sinners, the wicked, that set God himself at defiance, he says, Lift not up the horn; boast not of your power, and prerogatives, persist not in your contumacy and contempt. This is Christ's word in his gospel, that every mountain will be brought low before him, Isa. 40. 4. Let not the anti-christian power lift up itself against him, for it shall certainly be broken to pieces. Let the church unite in thanksgivings, that the Redeemer is exalted. Without Him, the earth and all its inhabitants would rush into universal confusion, impiety, iniquity, and ruin. All the present hopes and future happiness of the human race spring from the work and authority of the Son of God.

5. In Abyssinia, the great men on occasions of state wear a horn—a piece of metal of a conical form, fixed by a fillet on their foreheads. Bruce observes upon the peculiar manner in which they hold their heads to keep this ornament erect, as illustrating this verse.

Ver. 6—10. We see strange revolutions in states and kingdoms. Here we are directed to look at the Author of them, and are taught where the original of power is. Men cannot gain promotion either by wisdom or wealth; no second causes will raise men to preferment without the First Cause. It comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. He mentions not the north, the same word that signifies the north, signifies the secret place; and from the secret of God's counsel it does come. Or from the oracle in Zion, which lay on the north side of Jerusalem, Ps. 48. 2.

From God alone all must receive their doom, ver. 8; In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, which he puts into the hands of the children of men, a cup of providence, mixed up, as he thinks fit, of many ingredients; a cup of affliction; the sufferings of Christ are called a cup, Matt. 26. 39; John 18. 11. The judgments of God upon sinners are the cup of the Lord's right hand, Hab. 2. 16. The wine is red, denoting the wrath of God, which is in the judgments executed on sinners. It is full of mixture, prepared in wisdom, so as to answer the end: there are mixtures of mercy and grace in the cup of affliction, when it is put into the hands of God's own people; mixtures of the curse, when it is put into the hands of the wicked. Some drops of this wrath

may light on good people; when God's judgments are abroad, they have their share in common calamities; but the dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked. The wicked man's cup, while he prospers in the world, is full of mixture, but the worst is at the bottom. The wicked are reserved to the day of judgment.

Here are two practical inferences drawn from these great truths, and they are the same purposes of duty that he began the psalm with. 1. He will praise God, and give him glory, for the power to which he had advanced him, ver. 9. The exaltation of the Son of David will be the subject of the saint's everlasting praises. He will give glory to God, knowing it was for Jacob his servant's sake, and because he loved his people Israel, that he made him king over them. 2. He will use the power with which he is intrusted, for the great ends for which it was put into his hands, ver. 10. He resolves to be a protection and praise to them that do well. While the wicked shall be cast down and cut off, the church of justified and sanctified believers shall inherit the throne of glory.

Then let sinners submit to the King of righteousness; let believers rejoice in and obey him; let those in authority remember their obligation to copy him from whom they have authority; let the people remember from whom their rulers receive power, that they may be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake.

8. By mixed wine is not to be understood wine lowered with water, or made weaker, but made stronger by infusing spices or powerful drugs: see Prov. 23. 30; Isa. 5. 22.

The Greek version is, "A cup of strong wine full of mixture; and he has poured it out of one [vessel] into another; but yet the dregs thereof are not emptied out. Those all the ungodly on earth shall drink up."—*Wall*.

Many suppose that this psalm has reference to the accession of David to the throne, but *Patrick* and others consider that it relates to the destruction of Sennacherib's army, (as in the tabular view,) or even to a later period. *Gill* says, "This psalm respects the times of the gospel dispensation, and includes both the first coming of Christ in the flesh, and his second coming to judgment. The argument in the Syriac is, The Divinity of Christ, with a remembrance of the judgment."

PSALM LXXVI.

Upon occasion of some glorious victory, (1.) The psalmist congratulates the happiness of the church, in having God so nigh, ver. 1-3. He celebrates the glory of God's power, which this was

an illustrious instance of, ver. 4-6. (2.) He infers hence, what reason all have to fear before him, ver. 7-9. And what reason his people have to trust in him, and to pay their vows to him, ver. 10-12. It is never out of season to glorify God for the great things he has done for his church, especially for the victories of the Redeemer over the powers of darkness, which all the old testament victories were types of, that are celebrated in the psalms.

Ver. 1-6. The psalmist, in the name of the church, triumphs here in God.

It is the honour and privilege of Judah and Israel, that among them God is known, and where he is known, his name will be great, ver. 1. Happy people that have their land filled with the knowledge of God; happy persons that have their hearts filled with that knowledge! In Judah God was known so as he was not known in other nations. In the whole land of Judah and Israel God was known, and his name was great; but in Zion were his tabernacle and his dwelling-place. Thither they came to sacrifice, to address themselves to him; there he recorded his name; and of that place he said, Here will I dwell, for I have desired it. It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by his ordinances. Observe how threatening the danger was, ver. 3; but all weapons are broken and rendered useless, in favour of the people near to God.

Now this victory redounded to the honour of Israel's God, ver. 4. Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly, it will appear that God is above them.

And to the perpetual disgrace of the enemies of Israel, ver. 5, 6. All their force was of no avail, when it was levelled against Jerusalem. They have slept, not the sleep of the righteous, who sleep in Jesus, but the sleep of sinners, that shall wake to everlasting shame and contempt. God did but speak the word, as the God that commands deliverances for Jacob, and the chariot and horse were both cast into a dead sleep; when the men were laid dead by the destroying angel, the chariot and horse were not formidable, 2 Kings 19. 35. See the power and efficacy of God's rebukes. With what pleasure may christians apply this to the advantages enjoyed by the Redeemer! He it was, that vanquished the strong man armed, spoiled principalities and powers,

and made a show of them openly. He is more fully known under the christian dispensation, than he was in Judah. His glory is greater as dwelling in human nature, and in the hearts of his people, than in the tabernacle on Zion, and as the protector of Jerusalem.

3. The fiery-arrows. The word denotes arrows round the head of which some burning substance was wrapped.

Ver. 7—12. This glorious victory with which God had graced and blessed his church, here speaks three things.

1. Terror to God's enemies, ver. 7—9. Let all the world learn by this event to stand in awe of the Great God. God's people are the meek of the earth, Zeph. 2. 3, the quiet in the land, 35. 20, that can bear to suffer wrong, but do none; yet God will appear for their salvation, and plead their cause. The righteous God long seems to keep silence, yet, sooner or later, he will make judgment to be heard. When he is speaking judgment from heaven, it is time for the earth to compose itself into an awful and reverent silence.

2. Comfort to God's people, ver. 10. We live in a very angry provoking world, we often feel much, and are apt to fear more from the wrath of man. But as far as God permits the wrath of man to break forth at any time, he will make it turn to his praise. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, not only by the checks given to it, but even by the liberty given to it for a time. The hardships which God's people suffer by the wrath of their enemies, are made to redound to the glory of God and his grace. What will not turn to his praise, shall not be suffered to break out; The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as he does to the raging sea; Hitherto it shall come, and no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed.

3. Duty is inculcated on all, ver. 11, 12. Let all submit themselves to this great God, and become his loyal subjects. And, having taken him for our King, let us bring presents to him, as subjects to their Sovereign. Our prayers and praises, and especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord our God. He ought to be feared; He is the Fear, so the word is; his name is glorious and fearful; and he is the proper Object of our fear. He will be feared, even by those

who think it their sole prerogative to be feared, ver. 12. He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he shall slip it off as easily as we slip off a flower from the stalk, or a bunch of grapes from the vine; so the word signifies. He can dispirit the most daring; he will be terrible to the kings of the earth. Sooner or later, if they are not so wise as to submit themselves to him, he will force them to call in vain to rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from his wrath, Rev. 6. 16. Since there is no contending with God, it is as much our wisdom, as it is our duty to submit to him.

Happy they who are now meek and poor in spirit; who trust in his mercy, and submit to his will; who dedicate themselves to his service. Man may despise, or be angry at them: the powers of darkness may raise storms around them, but all shall turn to the glory of God in their salvation, and God will restrain the remainder of their wrath. Let us then seek his favour as our portion, and commit all our concerns to him.

Such was to be the gratitude and devotion of the Israelites for a temporary deliverance from an earthly tyrant. How much higher ought that of christians to rise for eternal redemption from the great oppressor!—(32.)

PSALM LXXVII.

The psalmist (1.) Complains of the deep impressions which his troubles made upon his spirits, and the temptation he was in, to despair of relief, ver. 1—10. (2.) He encourages himself to hope that it would be well at last, by the remembrance of God's former appearances for the help of his people, of which he gives several instances, ver. 11—20. From this psalm let us learn to take shame to ourselves for all our sinful distrusts of God, and of his providence and promise; and give to him the glory of his power and goodness, by thankful commemoration of what he has done for us formerly, and cheerful dependence on him for the future.

Ver. 1—10. We know not whether this psalm was composed on a personal or a public occasion; but it is on that very account more generally useful to the church and to believers, in their various trials and difficulties.

The conflict the psalmist had with his griefs and fears, seems to have been over,

when he penned the record of it, ver. 1; but he inserts it as an intimation that his trouble did not end in despair; for God heard him, and, at length, he knew it.

Being afflicted, he prayed, Jam. 5. 13. and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, ver. 1. His complaints he directed to God, and turned into prayers, ver. 2. Days of trouble must be days of prayer, days of inward trouble especially; when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversion of business or recreation, but he sought God, and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind, must pray it away.

To a soul deeply sensible of the world's vanity, and the misery of sin, every day is, "a day of trouble," and the whole of its pilgrimage is a dark and wearisome "night," during which the soul seeks after the Beloved by prayer. For his sake, and the joys expected from his presence, the pleasures of sense are put away, and the soul "refuses to be comforted" by such comforters. An Israelite could not enjoy himself in Babylon; a Christian cannot find perfect satisfaction in the world; a return to Jerusalem will employ the thoughts of both.—(32.)

Grief may be called melancholy indeed when it admits of no intermission; such was this. His wound bled inwardly, and it ceased not in the time appointed for rest and sleep. He had no mind to think of those things that would be his comforts; he put them far from him, as one that indulged himself in sorrow. Those that are in sorrow, upon any account, not only prejudice themselves, but affront God, if they refuse to be comforted.

My sore ran in the night, ver. 2. My hand was stretched out by night, and ceased not. He continued the whole night, with his voice and hands lifted up to God, imploring his gracious and powerful assistance.—(30.)

He pored upon the trouble; the methods that should have relieved him did but increase his grief, ver. 3. When he remembered God, it was only his justice, wrath, and dreadful majesty. His spirit was overwhelmed, and sank under the load. The means of his present relief were denied him, ver. 4. He could not enjoy sleep. He could not speak, by reason of the disorder of his thoughts, the tumult of his spirits, and the confusion his mind

was in. Grief never preys so much upon the spirits, as when it is thus smothered and pent up.

To a night so spent, a season of captivity and persecution may be compared. Thus the ancient church looked for the first coming of Christ, and thus the church that now is, expects his second advent, watching for the dawn of that morning which is to put an end to darkness and sorrow. In the mean time she gives herself to meditation and prayer.—(32.)

Melancholy people are apt to pore altogether upon the days of old, and the years of ancient times, and to magnify them, to justify their own uneasiness and discontent, ver. 5, 6. But let not the remembrance of comforts we have lost, make us unthankful for those that are left, or impatient under our crosses. Particularly, he called to remembrance his song in the night, the comforts with which he had supported himself in former sorrows.

Here is the language of a disconsolate, deserted soul, walking in darkness, ver. 6—9; a case not uncommon, even with those that fear the Lord, Isa. 50. 10. Spiritual trouble is most grievous to a gracious soul; nothing wounds and pierces it like the apprehensions of God's being angry; the suspending of his favour wounds the spirit; and who can bear that? He is grappling with a strong temptation. God's own people, in a cloudy and dark day, may be tempted to make desperate conclusions about their own spiritual state, and the condition of God's church and kingdom in the world, and, as to both, to give up all for gone. But we must not give way to such suggestions as these. If fear and melancholy ask such questions, let faith answer them from the scripture; Will the Lord cast off for ever? God forbid, Rom. 11. 1. No, the Lord will not cast off his people, 94. 14. Will he not be favourable any more? Yes, he will; for though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, Lam. 3. 32. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? No; his mercy endures for ever; as it is from everlasting, it is to everlasting, 103. 17. Doth his promise fail for evermore? No; it is impossible for God to lie, Heb. 6. 18. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? No; he cannot deny himself, and his own name which he hath proclaimed gracious and merciful, Exod. 34. 6. Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? No; they are new every morning, Lam. 3. 23;

and therefore, How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Hos. 11. 8, 9.

The troubled fountain will work itself clear again, and the recollection of former times of more joyful experience will often suggest a hint, or inspire a hope, tending to relief. The psalmist then chid himself, ver. 10; he states, I said, This is mine infirmity. This is the calamity that falls to my lot; every one has his affliction, his trouble in the flesh; and this is mine, the cross I must take up. Or rather, This is my sin, it is mine iniquity; the plague of my heart. These doubts and fears proceed from the want and weakness of faith. We all know that concerning ourselves, of which we must say, This is our infirmity, a sin that most easily besets us. Despondency of spirit, and distrust of God, under affliction, are too often the infirmities of good people, and, as such, are to be reflected upon by us with sorrow and shame. When, at any time, it is working in us, we must thus suppress the rising of it. We must argue down the insurrections of unbelief, as the psalmist here. He had been considering the blessings formerly enjoyed, the remembrance of which did only add to his grief; but now he considered that those blessings of ancient times came from the Ancient of days, from the power and sovereign disposal of his right hand, who is over all, God blessed for ever; and this satisfied him.

Ver. 11—20. The psalmist here silences his fears of God's casting off his people, by the remembrance of the great things he had done for them formerly. It is good to persevere in the proper means for the strengthening of faith, though they do not prove effectual at first, ver. 11, 12. The works of the Lord, for his people, have been wondrous works. They are recorded for us, that they may be remembered by us. That we may have benefit by the remembrance of them, we must meditate upon them, and talk of them, that we may inform ourselves, and others, further concerning them. The due remembrance of the works of God will be a powerful antidote against distrust of his promise and goodness; for he is God, and changes not.

God's way is in the sanctuary, ver. 13. It is in holiness, so some. When we cannot solve the particular difficulties that may arise in our constructions of the Di-

vine Providence, this we are sure of—That God is holy in all his works, and will be sanctified in every dispensation of his providence. What he has done is according to what he has said, and we may easily gather, that he will not cast off his people for ever. God's way is for the sanctuary, and for the benefit of it. All he does, is for the good of his church.

God's way is in the sea; though God is holy, just, and good, in all he does, yet we cannot give an account of the reasons of his proceedings, nor make any certain judgment of his designs, ver. 19. God's ways are like the deep waters, which cannot be fathomed; like the way of a ship, which cannot be tracked. God's proceedings are always to be acquiesced in, but cannot always be accounted for.

It is true that the Lord's way is in the sea, but it is also in the sanctuary; he leads his people through deep waters of affliction or temptation; but he goes with them, and brings them forth when he has thereby destroyed the enemies of their souls. God has visibly, and beyond any contradiction, declared his strength among the people.

God brought Israel out of Egypt, ver. 15. Though they were delivered by power, yet they are said to be redeemed, because it was typical of the great redemption, which was to be wrought out, in the fulness of time, both by price and power.

We do not read in the history of Israel's passing through the Red Sea, that there were such displays of the Divine terror; yet there might be, and Josephus says there were such. But ver. 18 may refer to the thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes, at mount Sinai, when the law was given.

God went before Israel with all the care and tenderness of a shepherd. Moses was their governor, Aaron their high-priest; they were guides, overseers, and rulers, to Israel, and by them God led them.

The psalm concludes abruptly, and does not apply those ancient instances of God's power. But as soon as the psalmist began to meditate on these things, he found his very entrance upon this matter gave him light and joy; his fears vanished.

If we have harboured doubtful thoughts, we should, without delay, turn our minds to more encouraging meditations. The Lord's wondrous works, wrought for his people of old, are illustrious evidences of his power, mercy, and love, to his church. But the mysteries of redeeming love, and

the great events which attended the Saviour's sufferings and exaltation to his glorious throne, should be our favourite theme. There all the Divine perfections are displayed, and those who understand and believe the testimony of scripture, will be encouraged to expect every thing from the power, truth, and love of that God, who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, that with him, he might freely give us all things.

PSALM LXXVIII.

This psalm contains a declaration of God's dealings with his people, and their behaviour to him, in Egypt, in the wilderness, and after their settlement in Canaan, to the days of David. It is for the use and admonition of christians; who may here view, as in a glass, the mercies they have received and the returns which, alas! they have too often made.—(32.)

Here is (1.) An introduction calling for attention, ver. 1—8. (2.) An abstract of the history of Israel being brought forth from Egypt, 9—39. (3.) The continuation of that history, the settlement in the land of Canaan, with a conclusion in which the mercies of God to Israel are contrasted with their ingratitude, rebellion, and apostasies, ver. 40—72.

Ver. 1—8. The psalmist demands attention, ver. 1; being a prophet, he speaks as God's mouth, and demands subjection to what was said, as to a law.

These are called dark, or deep sayings, ver. 2. not because they are hard to be understood, but because they are carefully to be looked into; as the parables of our Saviour, Matt. 13. 35, which were as this, representations of the state of the kingdom of God among men. They are to be carefully transmitted to posterity, ver. 4. We are to transmit to our children the praises of the Lord, and his strength appearing in the wonderful works he has done.

The law of God was given with a particular charge to teach it diligently to their children, ver. 5; that the church, as the earth, may abide for ever.

That the providences of God concerning them, both in mercy and in judgment, might encourage them to conform to the will of God, ver. 7. The works of God will very much strengthen our resolution to set our hope in him, and to keep his commandments.

And that they might take warning not

to conform themselves to the example of their fathers, ver. 8. Their fathers, though the seed of Abraham, taken into covenant with God, and the only professing people he had then in the world, were stubborn and rebellious, and walked in direct opposition to God's will. Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy; those that do not set their hearts right, will not be stedfast with God.

We must enforce our instructions by a consistent example; and it is awful to think how many parents, by negligence and wickedness, become the murderers of their children. But let young persons know, that though they must not neglect to submit in all things lawful, yet they must not obey sinful orders, or copy sinful examples. They are earnestly to recommend the profession of the gospel by affectionate and respectful behaviour.

Ver. 9—39. In these verses the psalmist observes the rebukes of Providence that the people of Israel had been under, from their dealing treacherously with God, ver. 9—11. Sin dispirits men, and takes away the heart. The causes of their cowardice were no less shameful; and these were violation of God's law, and their covenant with him, ver. 10; and ingratitude to God for his favours, ver. 11. Our forgetfulness of God's works is the cause of our disobedience to his laws.

He takes occasion hence to compare this with their fathers' case; who were in like manner unmindful of God's mercies, and were therefore brought under his displeasure. This narrative is very remarkable, for it relates a kind of struggle between God's goodness and man's badness. Mercy, at length, rejoices against judgment. God did great things for his people Israel, when he first formed them into a people.

When God began thus to bless them, they began to affront him, ver. 17. They bore the miseries of servitude better than the difficulties of their deliverance, and never murmured at their task-masters, as they did at Moses and Aaron. As sin sometimes takes occasion by the commandment, so at other times it takes occasion by the deliverance, to become more exceeding sinful. God had given them meat for their hunger, in the manna, wholesome pleasant food, and in abundance. But they must have dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite.

Nothing is more provoking to God, than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh.

And they distrusted his power to give them what they desired. This was tempting God indeed! Never did unbelief, though always unreasonable, ask so absurd a question; Can He that melted down a rock into streams of water, give bread also? Or, can He that has given bread, provide flesh also? Be it ever so great a thing that we ask, it becomes us to own, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.

God is a Witness to all our murmurings and distrusts; he hears them, ver. 21, and is much displeased with them. The fire of the Lord burnt among them, Num. 11. 1. Or, it may be understood of the fire of God's anger which came up against Israel. To unbelievers God is a Consuming Fire. Those that will not believe the power of God's mercy, shall feel the power of his indignation. We are told why God thus resented it, ver. 22. Because by this it appeared that they believed not in God, they did not give credit to the revelation he had made of himself, for they would not commit themselves to him. Those cannot be said to trust in God's salvation as their happiness at last, who cannot trust his providence in the way to it. Their experience of the power and goodness of God, ver. 23—25, aggravated their unbelief. He had given proofs of his power, not only on earth beneath, but in heaven above. To all that by faith and prayer, ask, seek, and knock, these doors shall at any time be opened, for the God of heaven is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. Justly might God take it ill that they should distrust him, when he had been so very kind to them. The daily provision God has made for us, ever since we came into the world, is no less merciful, and our distrust of God is therefore a great aggravation of our sins.

He expressed his resentment of the provocation; not in denying what they inordinately lusted after, but in granting it to them. See how good God is, even to the evil and unthankful, and wonder that his goodness does not overcome their badness. See what little reason we have to judge of God's love by such gifts of his bounty as these. Though he gave them their own desire, they were not estranged from their lust, ver. 29, 30; such is the nature of lust, it is content with nothing. They that indulge their

lust, will never be estranged from it. But what came of it? While the meat was yet in their mouth, the wrath of God slew the most luxurious, and most daring, ver. 31: see Num. 11. 33, 34.

The judgments of God upon them did not reform them any more than his mercies, ver. 32. Though his works of justice were as wondrous, and as great proofs of his power as his works of mercy, yet they were not wrought upon by them to fear God, nor convinced how much it was their interest to make him their Friend. Those hearts are hard indeed, that will neither be melted by the mercies of God, nor broken by his judgments.

Since they persisted in their sins, God proceeded in his judgments; but they were judgments of another nature, which wrought not suddenly, but slowly, ver. 33. For thirty-eight years there was not a step taken nearer Canaan, but they wandered to and fro: not only in vanity, but in trouble, for their carnalities were condemned to fall into wilderness. Those that sin still, must expect to be in trouble still. And the reason why we spend our days in so much vanity and trouble, why we live with so little comfort, and so little purpose, is, because we do not live by faith.

Under these rebukes they professed repentance, but they were not cordial and sincere in it. Their profession was plausible, ver. 34, 35. When some were slain, others cried to God for mercy. Afflictions are sent to put us in mind of God as our Rock and our Redeemer; for, in prosperity, we are apt to forget him. They were not sincere in this profession, ver. 36, 37; as if they thought by fair speeches to prevail with God to revoke the sentence, and remove the judgment, with a secret intention to break their word when the danger was over, Jer. 3. 10. They were not sincere, for they were not constant.

One would think this counterfeit repentance would have filled the measure of their iniquity. Yet God, being full of compassion, did not destroy them, ver. 38, 39, but spared their lives till they had reared a generation which should enter into the promised land. Not because their ruin would have been any loss to him, but because he was full of compassion. Because, though they did not rightly remember that he was their Rock, he remembered that they were but flesh—the true reason is, He is full of compassion.

In Israel's history we have a picture of our own hearts and lives, a summary of the history of the world and of the church. Insensible of the protecting hand of Him in whom they live, and move, and are, most spend their lives in rebellion against him. Few are content with meat for their use, but most crave provision for their lusts. God's patience and warnings and mercies embolden them to harden their hearts against his word.

The history of kingdoms is much the same. God hath not indeed dealt with any nation, in every respect, as with Israel; but we constantly find that increasing pride and prosperity produce great licentiousness, and impiety. Judgments and mercies have been little attended to until the measure of their sins has been full. And distinguished advantages have not prevented churches from degenerating into formality and heresy, forsaking the covenant, and casting off the commandments of God, till their light has been removed, and their privileges given to others. Nor has any collective body yet been found that for any length of time has been free from such declensions.

Even true believers can recollect that for many a year they abused the kindness of Providence. They admire the Lord's compassion and forbearance. He came for their deliverance, he forgave their sins, and opened the way for salvation. But, alas, they have provoked him by their unbelief and ingratitude, and it is of the Lord's mercies they are not consumed. When they come to their inheritance, how will they admire the Lord's patience and mercy who hath brought them to his heavenly kingdom!

9. See Deut. 1. 43, 46.

39. "The spirit goeth away, and it doth not return." *A. Clarke.*

Ver. 40—72. The scope of this paragraph is the same with the former. Let not those that receive mercy from God be thereby imboldened to sin, for the mercies they receive will aggravate their sin, and hasten the punishment of it; yet let not those that are under Divine rebukes for sin be discouraged from repentance, for their punishments are means of repentance, and shall not prevent the mercy God has yet in store for them.

Observe the sins of Israel in the wilderness again reflected on, because written for our admonition, ver. 40, 41. They grieved the Lord, they put him under a

necessity of afflicting them. They limited him to their way and their time. It is presumption for us to limit the Holy One of Israel; for, being the Holy One, he will do what is most for his own glory; and, being the Holy One of Israel, he will do what is most for their good. We both impeach his wisdom, and betray our pride and folly, if we seek to prescribe to him.

Divers of the plagues of Egypt are here specified; good angels become evil angels to sinners; they that make the holy God their enemy, must never expect the holy angels to be their friends.

God made a way for his own people to go forth like sheep; and guided them in the wilderness, as a shepherd his flock, with all care and tenderness, ver. 52. God cast out the heathen before them, dividing each tribe an inheritance by line, making them to dwell in the houses of those whom they had destroyed. God could have turned the uninhabited, uncultivated wilderness into fruitful soil, and have planted them there; but the land he designed them was to be a type of heaven, and therefore must be the glory of all lands; it must likewise be fought for: the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

After they were settled in Canaan, ver. 56—58, the children were like their fathers, and brought their old corruptions into their new habitations. He gave them his testimonies, but they did not keep them; they turned back, and were like a deceitful bow, which, when drawn, breaks, and drops the arrow at the archer's foot. There was no confidence to be put in their promises or professions. It was spiritual adultery to worship idols, or to worship God by images, and therefore by it they are said to move him to jealousy, Deut. 32. 16, 21.

Their place in Canaan would no more secure them in a sinful way, than their descent from Israel. Presumptuous sins render even Israelites odious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice. God never leaves us till we leave him, never withdraws till we have driven him from us, ver. 60. Israel has small joy of the tabernacle without the presence of God in it. He gave up all into the hands of the enemy. Those whom God forsakes become an easy prey to the destroyer. The Philistines are sworn enemies to the Israel of God, and no less so to the God of Israel, and yet God will make use of them to be a scourge to his people. He

delivered his strength into captivity, the ark, ver. 61: see 1 Sam. 4. 11.

We read not of their repentance and return to God; but God was grieved for the miseries of Israel, and concerned for his own honour. He stirred up his strength to do great things for his people, ver. 65.

God provided a new settlement for his ark. He never sent it back to Shiloh, ver. 67; Jer. 7. 12. He chose the tribe of Judah, ver. 68; of that tribe Jesus was to be, who is greater than Joshua.

God set a good government over them; a monarch after his own heart. He chose David his servant out of all the thousands of Israel, and put the sceptre into his hand, from whom Christ was to come, and who was to be a type of him, ver. 70. Concerning David, observe here, he was but a shepherd, remarkable for his tenderness and compassion to his flock; but this made him a type of Christ, who feeds his flock like a shepherd, Isa. 40. 11.

God preferred him to feed Jacob his people, ver. 71. It was a great honour that God put upon him, in advancing him to be king over God's peculiar people. It is the charge both to magistrates and ministers, that they feed the flock of God.

David, having so great a trust put into his hands, obtained mercy of the Lord to be found both skilful and faithful in the discharge of it, ver. 72. The principles of his religion were the maxims of his government; which he administered, not with carnal policy, but with godly sincerity, by the grace of God. He did it by the skilfulness of his hands; he was sincere in what he designed, prudent in what he did, and chose out the most proper means in pursuit of his end, for his God did instruct him to discretion. Happy the people that are under such a government! With good reason does the psalmist make this the finishing, crowning instance of God's favour to Israel; for David was a type of Christ the great and good Shepherd, who was humbled first, and then exalted, and of whom it was foretold, that he should be filled with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, and should judge and reprove with equity, Isa. 11. 3, 4. On the integrity of his heart and the skilfulness of his hands all his subjects may entirely rely, and of the increase of his government and people there shall be no end.

Let us all seek to partake the privi-

leges of his true people, whom he spares and pities as a father doth his children; but let us be careful not to grieve him who is our Friend, by distrust, ingratitude, and forgetfulness of his mercies, which will tend to our own loss. Every trial of human nature hitherto confirms the testimony of scripture, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Jer. 17. 9, and that nothing but being created anew by the Holy Ghost can cure any of their ungodliness and iniquity. Let us then walk humbly and watchfully, trusting only in his mercy, and praying daily that we may profit by all our chastisements.

PSALM LXXIX.

We have here, (1.) A representation of the very deplorable condition that the people of God were in, ver. 1—5. (2.) A petition to God for succour and relief, that their sins might be pardoned, and that they might be delivered, ver. 6—13. It is especially seasonable in a day of perplexity, to excite our desires toward God, and encourage our faith in him.

Ver. 1—5. This psalm leads our thoughts to the Babylonish captivity. God is complained to—whether should children go but to their father, to such a father as is able and willing to help?

They complain here of the anger of their enemies, and the outrageous fury of the oppressor. See what a change sin made in the holy city, now the heathen are suffered to pour in upon them. The sanctuary which God had built like high palaces, and which was thought to be established as the earth, was now laid level with the ground. God's own people had defiled it by their sins, and therefore God suffered their enemies to defile it by their insolence.

Abundance of human blood was shed, and with no more reluctance or regret than as if they had spilt so much water. They insulted their dead bodies, which was in a particular manner grievous to the Jews to see, because God had given them an express law against this, Deut. 21. 23.

They complain that they are become a scorn and derision to them that are round about. If God's professing people degenerate, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach help to bring us to true repentance. But if

has been the lot of the gospel Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were counted as the offscouring of all things.

They wonder most at God's anger. This they discern in the anger of their neighbours, and this they complain most of; How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry? Shall it be for ever? This intimates, that they desired no more than that God would be reconciled, that his anger might be turned away, and then the remainder of men's wrath would be restrained. Those who desire God's favour as better than life, cannot but dread and deprecate his wrath as worse than death.

We should in every affliction first deprecate the wrath of the Lord, and seek forgiveness of our iniquities, beseeching the God of our salvation to cleanse away the pollution and guilt of our sins; then he will prevent us with his tender mercies, and deliver us, however low we are brought.

Ver. 6—13. Observe the character of those prayed against; such as have not known God, nor called on his name. They that persist in ignorance of God, and neglect of prayer, are the ungodly, who live without God in the world. Here is prayer for the pardon of sin, which they own to be the procuring cause of all their calamities. How unrighteous soever men were, God was righteous in permitting them to do what they did. They pray that God would not remember against them their former iniquities, ver. 8. When God pardons sin, he blots it out, and remembers it no more. That he would purge away the sins they had been lately guilty of, by which their minds and consciences had been defiled, ver. 9. Deliverances from trouble are granted in love, and are mercies indeed, when they are grounded upon the pardon of sin, and flow from that; we should therefore be more earnest with God in prayer for the removal of our sins, than for the removal of our afflictions, and the pardon of them is the foundation and sweetness of our deliverances.

They pray that God would work deliverance and salvation for them, and bring their troubles to a good end, and that speedily. They had no hopes but from God's mercies, his tender mercies. They looked upon themselves as the proper objects of Divine compassion, and so near to desperation, that unless Divine mercy did

speedily interpose to prevent their ruin, they were undone. They plead in the great distress they were reduced to, their dependence upon God. They plead no merit, they pretend to none, but, Help us for the glory of thy name; pardon us for thy name's sake. The best encouragements in prayer are those that are taken from God only, and those things whereby he has made himself known. By making bare his everlasting arm on their behalf, he would make unto himself an everlasting name; and their deliverance would be a type and figure of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time Messiah the Prince would work out, to the glory of God's name. His wrath will be poured out upon all that have not known or called upon his name.

The christian, though not at present subject to those external calamities endured by the Jews, forgets not that he is often persecuted and led captive by his evil desires, and bound in the chain of his sins. The world to him is a prison; sentence of death is passed upon him, and he knows not how soon that sentence may be executed. How properly therefore may he, and how fervently should he at all times pray, O let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die!—(32.)

By the greatness of his power, and for the glory of his name, God will either preserve the lives of those whom persecutors appoint to die, or he will receive them into glory. So that his people, the sheep of his pasture, will give him thanks for ever according to the desire of their hearts; and a succession of believers shall praise him to all generations. The cause of God will finally triumph upon earth, as well as eternally in heaven.

How glorious will be the day, when triumphs over sin and sorrow, over every thing that exalteth and opposeth itself, the church universal shall behold the adversary disarmed for ever; while placed in pastures of joy, and led to the waters of eternal comfort, that church shall, from age to age, incessantly sing the praises of her great Shepherd and Bishop, her King and her God.—(32.)

PSALM LXXX.

The psalmist here, (1.) Begs for the tokens of God's presence and favour, ver.

1—3. He complains of the rebukes they were under, ver. 4—7. (2.) He illustrates the present desolations of the church, by the comparison of a vine and a vineyard, which had flourished, but was now destroyed, ver. 8—16. He concludes with prayer to God for mercy, ver. 17—19.

Ver. 1—7. The psalmist, in the name of the church, applies to God by prayer, with reference to the afflicted state of Israel. He entreats God's favour for them, ver. 1, 2.

He that dwelleth upon the mercy-seat, is the good Shepherd of his people, and leads them as a valued flock, with all attention and tenderness. In all our troubles and dangers let us call upon him to shine upon our souls and upon our path, that we may be cheered and directed by his presence and favour. But we can neither expect the comfort of his love, nor the protection of his arm, unless we are partakers of his converting grace. Our part is to pray for it; the same must be our conduct when we have lost our comfort, and are exposed to rebukes by having fallen into sin, and are sensible of the necessity of returning to the Lord our rest.

The psalmist desires from God, that he would give ear to the cry of their miseries, and of their prayers; that he would shine forth in his own glory, and in favour and kindness to his people; that he would stir up his strength, that he would excite it, and exert it. In the sight of all the tribes of Israel; let them see it to their satisfaction.

He complains of God's displeasure, and dreads that more than any thing, ver. 4. If he be really angry at the prayers of his people, we may be sure it is because they ask amiss, Jam. 4. 3. They pray, but their ends are not right, or there is some secret sin harboured and indulged in them. But perhaps it is only in their own apprehension; he seems angry with their prayers, when really he is not; he will try their patience and perseverance in prayer, as Christ tried the woman of Canaan.

The tokens of God's displeasure which they had been long under, were both their sorrow and shame, ver. 5. But there are many that spend their time in sorrow, who yet shall spend their eternity in joy. It was their shame, ver. 6. God, by frowning upon them, made them a strife unto their neighbours; each strove which should

afflict them most. When God is displeased with his people, we must expect to see them in tears, and their enemies in triumph.

He prays again for converting grace, in order to their acceptance with God, and their salvation, ver. 7. Observe, there is no salvation but from God's favour. We must turn again to God from the world and the flesh, and then he will cause his face to shine upon us. There is no conversion to God but by his own grace. We must pray earnestly for his grace; pleading that gracious promise, Prov. 1. 23, Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. This prayer is for a national conversion; in this method we must pray for national mercies. National holiness is the way to secure national happiness.

Ver. 8—19. The church is here represented as a vine and a vineyard. The root of this vine is Christ, Rom. 11. 18. The branches are believers, John 15. 5. The church is like a vine, weak, and needing support, unsightly, but spreading and fruitful, and its fruit most excellent; the church is a choice and noble vine; we have to acknowledge the goodness of God, that he has planted such a vine in the wilderness of this world, and preserved it.

Observe here how the vine of the old testament church was planted at first. It was brought out of Egypt; the heathen were cast out of Canaan to make room for it. God, having made room for it, and planted it, caused it to take deep root; so firm, that their neighbours could not prevail to pluck it up.

It spread and flourished. Israel had abundance of men of valour, like the goodly cedars. They extended their conquests and dominion to the neighbouring countries, ver. 11. Observe concerning this vine, that it is praised for its shadow, its boughs, and its branches, but not a word of its fruit, for Israel was an empty vine, Hos. 10. 1. God came, looking for grapes, but beheld wild grapes, Isa. 5. 2. And if a vine do not bring forth fruit, no tree so useless, so worthless, Ezek. 15. 2—6.

And are not we planted as in a well-cultivated enclosure, with every means of being fruitful in works of righteousness? But, alas, the useless leaves of profession, and the empty boughs of notions and forms, abound far more than substantial piety and charity.

It was wasted and ruined. There was a good reason for this change in God's way toward them; this noble vine was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, Jer. 2. 21, and then no marvel if he took away its hedge, Isa. 5. 5. Yet God's former favours to this vine are urged as encouragements to faith, that God would not wholly cast them off. Observe the malice and enmity of the Gentiles against Israel. See also the restraint which these cruel enemies were under, for till God had broken down their hedges, they could not pluck a leaf of this vine. See how much it is the interest of a people to keep in the favour of God. The deplorable state of Israel is described, ver. 16. The people are treated like thorns and briars, that are nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned, and no longer like vines that are protected and cherished; they perish, not through the rage of the wild beast and the boar, but at the rebuke of God's countenance, to which they attribute all their calamities. It is well or ill with us, according as we are under God's smiles or frowns. When we consider the state of the purest part of the visible church, we cannot wonder that it is visited with sharp corrections.

They request that God would help the vine, ver. 14, 15. Take our woful condition into thy compassionate consideration, for the particulars of thy pity we refer ourselves to thee. Only behold the vineyard, or rather the root, which thy right hand hath planted. Lord, it is formed by thyself, and for thyself, therefore it may with humble confidence be committed to thyself, and to thine own care. The family of David, which God prospered for the good of Israel, and for his own glory, is meant here as typical of Christ.

Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, ver. 17, 18. Their king is called the man of God's right hand, as he was an instrument in God's right hand of much good to them, and under-shepherd, under him who was the great Shepherd of Israel.

But many interpreters, both Jewish and christian, apply this to the Messiah, the Son of David, the Protector and Saviour of the church, and the Keeper of the vineyard. He is the Man of God's right hand, to whom he has sworn by his right hand, so the Chaldee; whom he has exalted to his right hand, and who is indeed his right hand, the arm of the Lord, for

all power is given to him. He is that Son of man, whom he made strong for himself, for the glorifying of his name, and the advancing of the interests of his Kingdom among men. God's hand is upon him throughout his whole undertaking, to bear him out and carry him on, to protect and animate him, that the good pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand. The stability and constancy of believers are entirely owing to the grace and strength which are laid up for us in Jesus Christ, 68. 28. In him is our strength found, by which we are enabled to persevere to the end. Let thy hand be upon him, on him let our help be laid, who is mighty; let him be made able to save to the uttermost, that will be our security; so will not we go back from thee.

He who is not only the strongest branch, but the root and stem of the vine; who is the man of God's right hand, the Son of man, whom the Father hath made so strong for himself, hath been carried through his work for the church, and is possessed of all power in heaven and earth for her benefit. The vine therefore cannot be ruined, nor can any fruitful branch perish; but the unfruitful will be cut off and cast into the fire. Mere professors are branches which must be taken away.

The end of our redemption is, that we should serve him who hath redeemed us, and go back no more to our old sins, ver. 18. That soul which hath been quickened and made alive by Christ, should live to his honour and glory; that mouth which hath been opened by him, can do no less than show forth his praise, and call upon his saving name.—(32.)

Let us then come to him, and abide in him, without whom we can do nothing; let us beg of him to uphold and strengthen us, that we may not go back from him; let us call upon his name in behalf of ourselves and the whole church. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

PSALM LXXXI.

By this psalm we are assisted, (1.) In praising God for what he is to his people, ver. 1—3, and has done for them, ver. 4—7. (2.) In teaching and admonishing one another concerning the obligations we are under to God, ver. 8—10, the danger of revolting from him, ver. 11, 12, and the happiness we should have, if

we would but keep close to him, ver. 13—16. This, though spoken primarily of Israel of old, is written for our learning, and is to be applied by us to ourselves.

Ver. 1—7. It is our duty and our privilege to attend on God's ordinances, and to abound in praise and thanksgiving. We should excite one another to these pleasant services, embrace every opportunity, and improve all our abilities for them. The Lord is the strength of his people, and all the worship we can render is beneath his excellences, and our obligations to him, especially in our redemption from sin and wrath. When therefore he commands and intimates his acceptance of this reasonable service, he testifies his mercy and condescending love to us.

This was a statute for Israel, ver. 4, for the keeping up of religion among them: it was a law which all are bound by, and must be subject to. Praising God is not only a good thing, it is our indispensable duty; we neglect it at our peril. This solemn service was ordained for a standing evidence, ver. 5. It was a testimony to Israel, that they might know and remember what God had done for their fathers, and would be a testimony against them, if they should forget his statutes.

What God had done on Israel's behalf, was kept in remembrance by this and other solemnities, ver. 5. The psalmist takes notice of this aggravation of their slavery in Egypt, that there they heard a language they understood not, Gen. 42: 23; 114. 1. To make a deliverance appear more gracious, more glorious, it is good to observe all that makes the trouble we are delivered from appear more grievous.

Let them remember on the feast-day, that God had brought them out of the house of bondage; had removed their shoulder from the burden, ver. 6. We ought never to forget the base and ruinous drudgery to which Satan, our oppressor, had reduced us; how we deserved to have been left his bond-slaves, and to have had our portion with him. But when, in distress of conscience, we are led to cry for deliverance, the Lord answers our prayers, and sets us at liberty. As the giving of the law from Sinai, and the trials in the wilderness, were proofs of the Lord's peculiar regard to Israel, so convictions of sin, and trials by affliction prove his regard to his people.

God had borne their manners in the wilderness; Selah; Mark that; compare

God's goodness and man's badness. Now if they, on their solemn feast-days, were thus to call to mind their redemption out of Egypt, much more ought we, on the christian sabbath, to call to mind a more glorious redemption wrought out for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, from worse than Egyptian bondage, and the many gracious answers he has given to us, notwithstanding our manifold provocations.

3. In the Jewish church, notice of feasts, jubilees, &c. was given by the sound of the trumpet. All new moons, or beginnings of months, were observed in this manner, Numb. 10. 1. On the new moon of Tisri, or the seventh month, answering to September, was kept a great festival, the feast of trumpets, Lev. 23: 24; Numb. 29. 1. Before Israel came out of Egypt, this was the beginning of the year, and was still so reckoned for civil purposes. The great day of atonement and the feast of tabernacles were in this month. This psalm therefore is supposed by some to have been especially intended for exciting devotion at the beginning of a month, wherein so many blessings were commemorated.

5. The Greek version, "He heard a language."

Ver. 8—15. God, by the psalmist, here speaks to Israel, and, in them, to us. He demands their diligent and serious attention; it is their interest to hearken, yet it is questionable if they will, ver. 8. He puts them in mind of their obligation to him, as the Lord their God and Redeemer, ver. 10. The great command was, That they should have no other gods before him, ver. 9. He will not suffer his glory to be given to another. See here what is our duty—to raise our expectations from God, and enlarge our desires toward him. We cannot look for too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. We may have enough from God, if we pray for it in faith; Ask, and it shall be given you; he gives liberally, and upbraids not. But he speaks to many, both by the requirements of his law, and the invitations of his gospel, who profess themselves his people, yet will not hearken to his voice, expecting more satisfaction from their lusts. They said none of me. "They acquiesced not in my word," so the Chaldee. God was willing to be to them a God, but they were not willing to be to him a people. This is the real cause of their ruin; they thus provoke the Lord to leave them to their perverse choice, ver. 12. All the wickedness of the world is owing to man's wilfulness. People are not religious, because they will not.

God left them to do as they would, and then they did all that was ill; they walked

in their own counsels, and not according to the counsels of God. God was not the Author of their sin, he left them to the lusts of their own hearts, and the counsels of their own heads; if they do not well, the blame must lie upon them. The expressions are very affecting, ver. 13—16; they show how unwilling God is, that any should perish, and desirous that all should come to repentance. He delights not in the ruin of sinful persons or nations. What enemies sinners are to themselves!

The reason of the withholding of the mercy is their neglect of the duty; If they had hearkened to me, I would soon have subdued their enemies. We are apt to say, If such a method had been taken, such an instrument employed, we should soon have subdued our enemies: but we mistake; if we had hearkened to God, and kept to our duty, it had been done, but it is sin that makes our troubles long, and salvation slow.

Upon the same conditions of faith and obedience do Christians hold those spiritual and eternal good things which the pleasant fields and fertile hills of Canaan showed forth. Christ is the Bread of life; he is the Rock of salvation, and his promises are as honey to pious minds. But they who reject him as their Lord and Master, must also lose him as their Saviour and their reward.—(32.)

The Lord delighteth in the conversion of sinners, and the faith and obedience of his people. They may desire and ask as much as they will; he will answer and exceed their expectations. Their enemies shall be subdued, their souls satisfied with those blessings which flow from the Rock of salvation; their bodies shall be fed with food convenient, and their eternal inheritance secured, while all the haters of the Lord shall fall under his power, and perish for ever. May He then incline our hearts to obey his call, and walk in his ways; may he enlarge and assist our prayers, that, being delivered from our enemies, we may take the waters of life and salvation, drink and live for ever.

PSALM LXXXII.

We have here, (1.) The dignity of magistracy, and its dependence upon God, ver. 1. The duty of magistrates, ver. 3, 4. The degeneracy of bad magistrates, and the mischief they do, ver. 2, 5. (2.) Their doom, ver. 6, 7. The desire and

prayer of all good people, that the kingdom of God may be increased, ver. 8.

Ver. 1—5. Observe here the power and honour of magistrates; they are the mighty; they are so in authority, for the public good; it is great power that they are intrusted with, and they ought to be mighty in wisdom and courage. They are in the Hebrew called "gods;" the same word is used for these subordinate governors that is used for the sovereign Ruler of the world. They are "Elohim." Angels are so called, both because they are great in power and might, and because God is pleased to make use of their service in the government of this lower world. Magistrates are likewise the ministers of his providence, for the keeping up order and peace, and particularly of his justice and goodness in punishing evil-doers, and protecting them that do well. Let subjects consider this, and be comforted with it; for good princes and good judges, who mean well, are under a Divine direction; and bad ones, who mean ill, are under a Divine restraint.

The authority of God is to be acknowledged and submitted to in those governors whom his providence has placed over us. But they are to be reminded that they are but viceroys of the King of heaven, bound to do his will, and to copy his example; and that if they judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked with present impunity, they will have a severe sentence denounced on them at last: see 2 Chron. 19. 6, 7. These plain truths are forgotten by many in authority; they know not, because they will not understand, ver. 5. They have baffled their own consciences, and so they walk on in darkness, not knowing or caring what they do, or whither they go. They that walk on in darkness, are walking on to everlasting darkness.

See what were the consequences of this sin; All the foundations of the earth, or of the land, were out of course: when justice is perverted, what good can be expected? The evil actions of public persons are public mischiefs.

1. The Chaldee reads, "Among the judges or magistrates."

Ver. 6—8. It is a hard thing for men to have so much honour put upon them by the hand of God, and so much honour paid them, as ought to be by the children of men, and not to be proud of it, and to

think of themselves above what is right. But here follows a mortifying consideration; Ye shall die like men. This may be taken either as the punishment of bad magistrates, such as judged unjustly, God will cut them off. Or, kings and princes, all the judges of the earth, shall die, and all their honour shall be laid in the dust.

The psalmist looks up to God, ver. 8; Arise, O God, judge the earth; and when he prays that he would do it, he believes that he will do it. Thou shalt inherit all nations. This has respect to the kingdom of providence; God governs the world. There is a righteous God to whom we may have recourse, and on whom we may depend, for the effectual relief of all that find themselves aggrieved by unjust judges. It also has respect to the kingdom of the Messiah. It is a prayer for the hastening of it, that Christ would come, who is to judge the earth, and the promise is pleaded, that God shall give him the heathen for his inheritance. Thou, O Christ, shalt inherit all nations, and be the Governor over them. Let the second coming of Christ set to rights all these disorders. Considering the state of affairs in the world, from the beginning hitherto, we have need to pray that the Lord Jesus would arise and take possession of his inheritance, and rule over all nations, in truth, righteousness, and peace.

PSALM LXXXIII.

The psalmist here makes an appeal and application, (1.) To God's knowledge, by representing the designs and endeavours of the enemies to destroy Israel, ver. 1—8. (2.) To God's justice and jealousy, both for his church and for his own honour, by an earnest prayer for the defeat of their attempt, that the church might be preserved, the enemies humbled, and God glorified, ver. 9—18. This we may apply to the enemies of the gospel-church, all anti-christian powers and factions.

Ver. 1—8. The psalmist here begs of God to appear on the behalf of his injured, threatened people, ver. 1. Sometimes God seems not to be concerned at the unjust treatment which is given to his people. Then he gives us leave to call upon him, as here. God's words and actions are the same thing. Enmity to the holiness and authority of God is the real cause of the hatred borne to his people.

All wicked people are God's enemies, (the carnal mind is enmity against God,) but especially wicked persecutors; they hated the religious worshippers of God, because they hated God's holy religion. They are confederate against God, ver. 5, for they are so against the people of God. God's people are his hidden ones, ver. 3; hidden in respect of secrecy; their life is hid with Christ in God; the world knows them not; if they knew them, they would not hate them as they do. In respect of safety; God takes them under his special protection, and yet the wicked resolve to destroy those whom God resolves to preserve.

The subtlety of the old serpent appears in their management, ver. 3, and they contrive by all possible means, though ever so base, ever so bad, to gain their point. Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends that they may join in crucifying Christ, surely Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will be made friends that they may join in preaching Christ.

It is no less than the utter ruin of Israel that they design, ver. 4. It is the wish of wicked men, that there might be no religion among mankind. Having banished the sense of it out of their own hearts, they would gladly see all its laws and ordinances abolished, all its restraints and obligations shaken off, and all that preach, profess, or practise it, cut off. This they would bring it to if it were in their power.

The nations that entered into this alliance, are here mentioned, ver. 6—8. Some were allied to Israel in blood, and yet in alliance against Israel. There are no bonds of nature so strong, but the spirit of persecution has broken through them. See how numerous the enemies of God's church have always been; which magnifies the power of God in preserving to himself a church in the world, in despite of the combined force of earth and hell.

8. This verse determines the date of this psalm to the latter times of the Jewish kingdom; for the other nations here mentioned had molested them before, but the Assyrians not till towards the end.—Wall. Other commentators consider that it refers to the confederacy against Sennacherib, 2 Chron. 20.

Ver. 9—18. The psalmist here, in the name of the church, prays for the destruction of those confederate forces, and, in God's name, foretells it; for this amounts

to a prophecy that it shall be so; and this prophecy reaches to all the enemies of the gospel-church. All who oppose the kingdom of Christ may read their doom.

The defeat and discomfiture of former combinations may be pleaded in prayer to God, and improved for the encouragement of our own faith and hope. God is the same still that ever he was, the same to his people, and the same against his and their enemies; with him is no variableness. We may not prescribe to God, but we may pray to God that he will deal with the enemies of his church in our days, as he did in the days of our fathers.

He prays that God would make them like a wheel, ver. 13, that they might be in continual motion, unquiet, unsettled in all their counsels and resolves; that they might roll down speedily to their own ruin. Let them be no more fixed than the light stubble is, which the wind hurries away, and nobody desires to save it, Ps. 1. 4. That they might be consumed, as wood by the fire, or as briars and thorns, as fern or furze, upon the mountains, by the flames, ver. 14. When the stubble is driven by the wind, it will rest, at last, under some hedge, in some ditch or other; but he prays that they might not only be driven away as stubble, but burnt as stubble. And this will be the end of wicked men, Heb. 6. 8, and particularly of all the enemies of God's church. See how sinners are made miserable, ver. 15; the storm of God's wrath raises terrors in their own hearts, and so they are made completely miserable. It is the torment of devils, that they tremble.

Fill their faces with shame. The beginning of this might be a means of their conversion. Let them be broken and baffled in their attempts, that they may seek thy name, O Lord, ver. 16. Let them be made to fear thy name, and perhaps that will bring them to seek thy name. We should earnestly desire and beg of God for our enemies and persecutors, that God would bring them to repentance, and we should desire no other confusion to them, than what may be a step toward their conversion. The stormy tempest of Divine vengeance will overtake them, unless they repent and seek the pardoning mercy of their offended Lord.

God's triumphs over his enemies will be incontestable proofs that he is, according to his name JEHOVAH, a self-existent, self-sufficient Being, that has all power and

perfection in himself. That he is the most high God, sovereign Lord of all, over all the earth, even those nations of the earth that do not know him, or own him, for his kingdom rules over all. These are great and unquestionable truths, but men will hardly be persuaded to know and believe them; therefore the psalmist prays that the destruction of some might be the conviction of others.

The Lord will be glorified in and by all the punishments he inflicts. If present afflictions are not the means of bringing those who suffer them to repentance, they will often so evidence his power and justice, as to warn others to flee from his wrath, and to seek his favour. Doubtless the final punishment of the wicked will answer most important ends throughout the universal and everlasting kingdom of God. Then may we know that he, whose name is Jehovah, is most high over all the earth; may we fear his powerful wrath, seek his inestimable favour, trust his mercy and grace, and yield ourselves to be his willing, devoted servants and worshippers. And let us seek deliverance by the destruction of those enemies, our fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

13. The word galgal, translated wheel, may be rendered chaff, or some light substance.—*Louth.*

PSALM LXXXIV.

This psalm contains the pious breathings of a gracious soul after God, and communion with him. Though it be not so entitled, yet it may fitly be looked upon as a psalm or song for the sabbath-day, the day of our solemn assemblies. The psalmist here with great devotion expresses his affection, (1.) To the ordinances of God; his value for them, ver. 1, his desire toward them, ver. 2, 3, his conviction of the happiness of those that enjoy them, ver. 4—7. (2.) His affection to the God of the ordinances; his desire toward him, ver. 8—10, his faith in him, ver. 11, and his conviction of the happiness of those that trust in him, ver. 12.

Ver. 1—7. The psalmist being restrained from waiting upon God in public ordinances, by the want is brought to a more sensible conviction than ever of the worth of them. Observe, the ordinances of God are the believer's solace in this evil world; because in them he enjoys the presence of the living God. This

renders his tabernacles lovely in his eyes, and dear to his heart. This causes him to value the privilege of attending them, and to regret as his greatest calamity absence from them. The Lord himself is the rest of his people; but on earth they cannot get near to him, excepting through his ordinances. These are to their souls as the nest to the bird. They whose souls are at home, at rest in God, cannot but desire a settlement near his ordinances. Yet this is only an earnest of the happiness of heaven where the blessed inhabitants are always praising their God. Let us spend as much of our time here as may be, in that blessed work in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity. But how can they desire to enter that holy habitation who complain of the Divine ordinances as wearisome? Or those who think themselves wretched that devote all their days to his service?

Not only are they happy who have arrived at heaven; but those also are so who have set out with the desire of their hearts in search of that happiness; who making the Lord their strength, walk with pleasure in his ways, and approve them in their hearts. Those are truly happy, who go forth, and go on in the exercises of religion, not in their own strength, for then the work is sure to miscarry, but in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency is. David wished to return to God's tabernacles again, that there he might strengthen himself in the Lord his God for service and suffering. They will break through difficulties and discouragements, in waiting upon God in holy ordinances. Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Baca, but even that way may be made a well, if we make a due improvement of the comforts God has provided for the pilgrims to the heavenly city. They may have to pass through many a valley of weeping, and many a thirsty desert; but wells of salvation shall be opened for them, and consolations sent for their support. The journey, and the prospect of its happy end, will revive their hearts; they shall go from strength to strength with increasing alacrity and confidence, till every one of them arrives safe in the holy city, to appear before God, to see him as he is, to be for ever with him and like unto him. They that press forward in their christian course, shall find God adding grace to their graces, John 1:16.

They shall be changed from glory to glory, 2 Cor. 3:18, from one degree of glorious grace to another; till, at length, every one of them appears before God in Zion, to give glory to him, and receive blessings from him. They who grow in grace, shall, at last, be perfect in glory. May the Lord then incline the heart of every one of us to set out, and to proceed cheerfully in this pilgrimage, and may he defend us through it.

6. The meaning of this expression respecting Baca, it is not easy to ascertain. It was probably a desolate valley, the name signifies a species of shrub with which it might be overgrown; or "weeping," thus denoting the difficulties travellers had to encounter whose way lay through it, when proceeding to Jerusalem to partake of the ordinances.

Ver. 8—12. The psalmist prays that God will hear and accept his prayer; all his desire was plainly before God. In this petition he looks unto God under several of his glorious titles. As the Lord God of hosts, who has all power both in heaven and in earth; as the God of Jacob, who never said to the praying seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain; and as God our Shield, who takes his people under his special protection, Gen. 15:1. He looks to the Mediator; Look upon the face of thy Messiah, thine anointed one, 45:7. In all our addresses to God, we must desire that he would look upon the face of Christ, accept us for his sake, and be well pleased with us in him; we must look to him with faith, and then God will with favour look upon the face of the Anointed, who shows his face, when we without him dare not show ours.

He pleads his love to God's ordinances. Let us learn to account one day in God's courts, better than a thousand spent elsewhere; to value the time employed with him more than the rest of our lives; and to deem the meanest place in his service preferable to the highest preferments, even in the palaces of the ungodly. If this is not our preference, we are carnally minded, and to be so is death; what can all the riches or honours of the world do for us compared with the blessings of his favour who is the sun and shield of his people? Such a delight have holy hearts in holy duties. God himself was his hope, and joy, and all. We are here in darkness, but if God be our God, he will be to us a sun, to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us. We are here in danger, but he will be to us a shield, to secure us

from the fiery darts that fly thick about us; with his favour he will compass us as with a shield. Let us always walk in the light of the Lord, and never throw ourselves out of his protection, and we shall find him a sun to supply us with all good, and a shield to shelter us from all evil. See what he bestows upon his people. If he gives us grace here and glory hereafter, he will not withhold anything truly good from us. Though he has not promised to give riches and dignities, he hath promised to give grace and glory to all that seek them in his appointed way. And what is grace, but heaven begun below in the knowledge, love, and service of God? What is glory, but the completion of this happiness in perfect conformity to, and in full enjoyment of him for ever? If he have begun to give us grace, his grace will be sufficient for us, and will assuredly ripen into glory.

Both are God's gift, his free gift. And as wherever God gives grace, he will give glory, (for grace is glory begun, and is an earnest of it,) so he will give glory hereafter to none to whom he does not give grace now, or who receive his grace in vain, 2 Cor. 6. 1. This is a comprehensive promise, and is such an assurance of the present comfort of the saints, that, whatever they desire, and think they need, they may be sure that either infinite Wisdom sees it is not good for them, or infinite Goodness will give it them in due time. Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us every thing that is good for us.

Though we should be debarred from the privileges of God's house, yet we are not therefore debarred from blessedness, if we trust in God. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house, and in him we shall be happy, and may be easy.

Let us then seek this true happiness, and desire to be fruitful under the blessed influences of the Sun of righteousness; and to be safe and happy under the protection of the Shield of salvation. Let us study to walk uprightly in his ways, to trust in his mercies, thankfully to receive what he gives, and cheerfully to be without what he withholds or takes away, for we may be sure he sees that it would be evil for us, or we should not be without it. Let us hold it fast, as a principle that cannot be disputed, that the man is happy, really happy, whatever his out-

ward circumstances be, who trusteth in the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob.

PSALM LXXXV.

(1.) Here are petitions against sin and wrath, ver. 4, and for mercy and grace, ver. 7. The pleas are taken from former favours, ver. 1-3, and present distresses, ver. 5, 6. (2.) The psalmist looks for a return, ver. 8, and then recounts the favours to God's Israel, which by the spirit of prophecy he gave assurance of to others, and by the spirit of faith he took the assurance of to himself, ver. 9-13. The former part will be of use to direct our desires; the latter to encourage our faith and hope in those prayers.

Ver. 1-7. The people of God in a very low and weak condition, are here taught how to address themselves to God. They are to acknowledge with thankfulness the great things God had done for them, ver. 1-3. The sense of present afflictions should not drown the remembrance of former mercies; but even when brought very low, we must call to remembrance past experiences of God's goodness. They speak with pleasure that God had been favourable to the land. The favour of God is the fountain of happiness to nations, as well as to particular persons. He had restored them. The captivity of Jacob, though it may continue long, will be brought back in due time. He had not dealt with them according to the desert of their provocations. Thou hast covered all their sin. When God forgives sin, he covers it; and when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all. The bringing back of their captivity was an instance of God's favour to them, when it was accompanied with the pardon of their iniquity. He had not continued his anger against them so far, and so long, as they had reason to fear; for when sin is set aside, God's anger ceases. See what the pardon of sin is. In compassion to us, when an Intercessor has stood before thee, thou hast turned away thine anger.

They are taught to pray to God for grace and mercy, in reference to their present distress. They pray for converting grace, turn us from iniquity, turn us to thyself, and to our duty; turn us, and we shall be turned. All those whom God will save, sooner or later he will turn.

They pray for the removal of the tokens of God's displeasure. Observe, when we are reconciled to God, then, and not till then, we may expect the comfort of his being reconciled to us. They pray for the manifestation of God's good-will, ver. 7; let us know that thou hast mercy on us, and mercy in store for us. He shows mercy to those to whom he grants salvation; for salvation is of mere mercy.

Observe, ver. 5, 6, what they dread and deprecate; Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? What they desire and hope for; Wilt thou not revive us again? revive us with comforts spoken to us, revive us with deliverances wrought for us?

The mercies shown to Israel as a nation, in redeeming them from bondage and captivity, were signs of the redemption afforded to believers in all ages, in delivering them from the bondage of sin and Satan, which always accompanies the covering of their sins. The true people of God may expect sharp and tedious afflictions when they commit sin; but when they return to him with humble prayer, he will make them again to rejoice in him.

Ver. 8—13. Observe what the psalmist promises himself in answer to his prayers. All God's people are sanctified by his grace, and devoted to his glory; they may sometimes want peace, when without are fightings, and within are fears; but, sooner or later, God will speak peace to them. If he do not command outward peace, yet he will suggest inward peace; speaking to their hearts by his Spirit. The psalmist takes the comfort of it. When God speaks peace, we must with all humility and thankfulness receive it. He cautions the saints to do the duty which this calls for. To those, and those only, peace is spoken, who turn from sin. All sin is folly, but especially backsliding; it is the greatest folly to turn to sin after we have seemed to turn from it.

The particulars of this answer of peace may be taken as a promise to all who fear God and work righteousness, that they shall be easy, and happy; and as prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the blessings with which that kingdom should be enriched.

Surely his salvation is nigh, ver. 9, whatsoever our difficulties and distresses are. Also his honour is secured; that glory may dwell in our land. The worship of

God settled and established is the glory of a land. When that goes, the glory is departed; when that stays, glory dwells. This may refer to the Messiah, who was to be the glory of his people Israel, who came and dwelt among them, John 1. 14.

When God restored the captive Jews, he mercifully fulfilled his promises to them; their land again gave its increase. But the passage in ver. 10—13 is generally interpreted in a higher and fuller sense, of the harmony of the Divine attributes in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ. The truth of the promises is shown by the Divine mercy in sending the Redeemer. The Divine justice is now satisfied by the great atonement. Thus Christ, the way, truth, and life, sprang out of the earth when he took our nature upon him, and justice looked upon him well pleased and satisfied. For his sake all good things, especially his Holy Spirit, are given to those who ask him, and by his influences, believers are increased to the glory of God. Through Christ are obtained all things pertaining to life and godliness; the pardoned sinner becomes fruitful in good works, and by looking to and trusting in the Saviour's righteousness, finds his feet set in the way of his steps. Christ, as Mediator, brings heaven and earth together again, which sin had set at variance; through him truth springs out of the earth, that truth which God desires in the inward part, and then righteousness looks down from heaven, for God is just, and the justifier of them which believe in Jesus. In the kingdom of the Messiah these graces shall flourish and prevail.

May this salvation influence our hearts, and appear in our lives. May this glory dwell in our land, and yield increase of truth, goodness, and purity among us. Righteousness is a sure guide both in meeting God, and in following him.

10, 11. "Mercy and truth have met on the way; righteousness and peace have embraced." This is a remarkable text, and much has been said on it: but there is a beauty in it, which has not been noticed. Mercy and peace are on one side; truth and righteousness on the other. Truth requires righteousness; mercy calls for peace. They meet together on the way: one going to make inquisition for sin, the other to plead for reconciliation. Having met, their differences are adjusted; their mutual claims are blended together in one common interest; on which peace and righteousness immediately embrace. Thus, righteousness is given to truth; and peace is given to mercy. Now where did these meet?—In Christ Jesus. When were

they reconciled?—When he poured out his life on Calvary.—*A. Clarke.*

These four Divine attributes parted at the fall of Adam, and met together at the birth of Christ, in whom the tender mercy of our God visited us, and who is the truth; who is made unto us righteousness, and is our peace. See Luke 1. 78; John 14. 6; 1 Cor. 1. 30; Eph. 2. 14.—*Bp. Horne.*

PSALM LXXXVI.

The psalmist (1.) Pleads his poverty and earnestness in religion; also the goodness and mercy of God, as reasons why his prayer should be heard, ver. 1—7. (2.) He praises God, and foretells the conversion of all nations, ver. 8—10. He prays for instruction and singleness of heart, rendering thanks for mercies received, complaining of his enemies, and renewing his requests for help and comfort, ver. 11—17.

Ver. 1—7. Observe the petitions here put up to God. The condescension of our God is very great in bowing down his ear to receive the prayers of us poor wretched sinners, ver. 1; yet our poverty and wretchedness when felt, are a powerful plea in our behalf at the throne of grace.

The psalmist begs that God would take him under his special protection, ver. 2. Preserve my soul, save thy servant. I am one whom thou favourest, hast set apart for thyself, and made partaker of sanctifying grace. It is a great encouragement to prayer to feel that we have received the converting grace of God, have learned to trust in him, and to be his servants.

The first part of ver. 2, is like 119. 94; I am *thine*, O save me. The christian pleads in this expression his relation to Christ, as being a member of Christ's body, the church, and a partaker of the gifts which thereby he has received through the Spirit of holiness.—(32.)

When we lift up our souls in fervent desires of help from the Lord, we may hope that he will both preserve and rejoice our souls. Yet our defective holiness, our scanty services, our imperfect prayers afford no encouragement, if we had not a God of infinite mercy to approach unto. The abundance of his mercy to pardon all the sins, and to supply all the wants of those that call upon him, gives encouragement. Let us make our

prayers to Him in every time of trouble, and he will surely answer and help us.

Observe, when he prays, Rejoice my soul, he adds—for unto thee do I lift up my soul. We may expect comfort from God, when we keep up our communion with God. Then we may hope that God will meet us with his mercies, when we in our prayers send forth our souls as it were to meet him. And let us learn to be in a special manner earnest with God in prayer, when in affliction, ver. 7; for thou wilt hear and answer us, and we shall not seek in vain.

Ver. 8—17. Our God alone possesses almighty power, and infinite love; without these none can know or help us in all our necessities, or bear with all our provocations. Nor are any works at all like the works of Jehovah, among which that of redemption stands chief. All nations, therefore, are bound in interest as well as in duty to come and worship before him. It was by Christ that all nations were made, for without him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore through Christ, and by the power of his gospel and grace, all nations shall be brought to worship before God, Isa. 66. 23. Christ is the way and the truth, and we must both learn Christ, and walk in him. We cannot walk in God's way and truth, unless he teach us.

The believing soul will be more desirous to be taught the way and the truth of God, in order to walk therein, than to be delivered out of severe distress. But the most upright believers find it difficult to attain simplicity and singleness of heart, and they still have cause to pray, Unite our hearts to fear thy name, O Lord.

Our hearts are apt to wander; their powers and faculties scatter after a thousand things; we have therefore need of God's grace to unite them, that we may serve God with all that is within us. Let my heart be fixed for God, and firm and faithful to him, and fervent in serving him—that is an united heart. The fountain of mercy is inexhaustibly full, the streams of mercy are inestimably rich; when we speak of God's mercy to us, it becomes us thus to magnify it, Great is thy mercy toward me. Even the best saints owe it not to their own merit, but to the mercy of God, that they are saved from the lowest hell; the consideration of that should greatly enlarge their

hearts in praising the mercy of God. So glorious, so gracious a rescue from everlasting misery, requires everlasting praise.

Those who set not God before them, and especially the powers of darkness, seek after believers' souls; but the compassion, long-suffering, plenteous mercy, and truth of God will be their refuge and consolation; to Him they look for help and strength as well as pardon. They will wait on him to give them from time to time some token for good in their own experience from his comforting Spirit, and in the sight of others by the deliverances of his providence.

He prays for the tokens of God's favour to him, ver. 16, 17, that God would speak peace and comfort to him. That God would work deliverance for him, and set him in safety. He pleads relation; they whose parents were servants of the Lord, may urge that as a plea why he should hear and help them.

In considering David's experience and that of the believer, as resembling it, we must not lose sight of Him, who though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. He perfectly served, and continually called upon his heavenly Father, and through him the plenteous mercy of God is exercised towards the chief of sinners. Being raised from the dead, he is made triumphant over those who sought after his soul. All nations shall come and worship before him, and glorify the name of the Lord; but all who hate him shall be ashamed and perish for ever. May we trust him, copy his example, and learn from him to bear poverty, hardship, and persecution with cheerfulness and resignation; hoping and waiting for a happy issue out of all our trials.

This psalm is entitled a prayer of David, and is supposed to have been written in some great distress, but every man upon earth needs mercy; he who is truly sensible of his need will cry daily for it, and he who does so will obtain it. The prayers of Jesus poured forth in the days of his flesh, for the salvation of his church, were frequent and mighty; his intercession for us continual. Do they believe this who pray not at all, or who pray without devotion?—(32.)

PSALM LXXXVII.

Zion, for the temple's sake, is here preferred, (1.) Before the rest of the laud of

Canaan, as being crowned with special tokens of God's favour, ver. 1—3. (2.) Before any other place or country whatsoever, as being replenished with Divine blessings, ver. 4—7.

Ver. 1—3. This is a psalm of song, whose subject is the holy mountains, the temple built in Zion. The church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink or fall. Christ himself is the Foundation of it, which God has laid. Holiness is the strength and stability of the church; not so much that it is built upon mountains, as that it is built upon holy mountains; upon the promise of God, for the confirmation of which he has sworn by his holiness; upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints.

God had expressed a particular affection for it, ver. 2; there he met his people, and showed them the tokens of his favour. There was much said concerning it in the word of God, ver. 3. God said of the temple glorious things. Yet more glorious things are spoken of the gospel church; it is the purchase of his blood; it is a peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest condition, nor of any that belong to it, since such glorious things are spoken of it, and not one jot or tittle of what is said shall fall to the ground.

It behoves us to build our souls and our hopes on that foundation whereon God hath built his church, and manifests the glory of all his perfections; and, other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, even Jesus Christ. The glorious things spoken of Zion by the Spirit were all typical of Christ, and his work and offices; of the gospel church, its privileges and members; of heaven, its glory and perfect happiness. Isa. 33. 20, 21.

Ver. 4—7. The church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth. It is owed that other places have their glories, ver. 4. It is proved that the glory of Zion outshines them all, upon many accounts. The worthies of the church far exceed those of heathen nations, and their names will shine brighter in perpetual records. A man, a man was born in her; by which some understand Christ, that Man, that Son of man, who is fairer

than the children of men; he was born at Bethlehem, near Zion, and was the Glory of his people Israel. The greatest honour that ever was put upon the Jewish nation, was that of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, Rom. 9. 5. This also may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles; Of Zion, it shall be said, that the law which went forth out of Zion, the gospel of Christ, shall be an instrument to bring many souls to God, and the Jerusalem that is from above shall be acknowledged the mother of them all.

Zion's interest shall be strengthened and settled by an Almighty power. God himself, having founded her upon an everlasting foundation, whatever convulsions and revolutions there are of states and kingdoms, and however heaven and earth may be shaken, these are things which cannot be shaken, but must remain.

Zion's sons shall be registered with honour. In the records of heaven the meanest of those who are born again stand registered. When God returns with the children of men, that he may render to every man according to his works, he shall observe who was born in Zion, and consequently enjoyed the privileges of God's sanctuary; to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, Rom. 9. 4; 3. 1, 2. To them much was given, and therefore of them much will be required, and the account will be accordingly. Let those that dwell in Zion, mark this, and live up to their profession.

Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph. The springs of the joy of a carnal worldling lie in wealth and pleasure, but of a gracious soul in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true Temple; all our springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow; it pleased the Father, and all believers are well pleased, that in him should all fulness dwell.

All the springs of consolation are in the church of Christ alone, and thence all grace and consolation are derived from Christ, through his ordinances, to the souls of believers; they who draw not from these wells of salvation, seek broken cisterns that can hold no water.

4—6. "I will remember Egypt and Babylon; they shall be among them that shall acknowledge me, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia. This man shall be born there. And every one shall say of Zion, He was born there. And he, the Highest, shall establish him. Jehovah shall record in the scriptures of the people, that this man was born there."—*Horles.*

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This is one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it does not contain the least intimation of comfort or joy.

The psalmist, (1.) Prays for comfort to his soul, afflicted under the sense of wrath and desertion, ver. 1, 2. He pours out his soul to God, and lays before him a lamentation for his distressed condition, ver. 3—9. (2.) He wrestles by faith in his prayer to God for comfort, ver. 10—14; and finding no comfort, he renews his lamentation, leaving his prayer before God, ver. 15—18.—(18.)

The nature and degree of the sufferings described, the strength of the expressions used, the consent of ancient expositors, all concur in directing an application of the whole to our blessed Lord.—(32.)

Ver 1—9. The first words of the psalmist are the only words of comfort and support in all the psalm. There is nothing about him but clouds and darkness; but, before he begins his complaint, he calls God the God of his salvation, which intimates, that he looked up to God for salvation, and depended upon him to be the Author of it.

It is his comfort, that he had prayed; it is his complaint, that, notwithstanding his prayer, he was still in affliction. Men ought always to pray, and not to faint; God's own elect cry day and night to him. He was a man of sorrows. He says, My soul is full of troubles. Inward trouble is the sorest trouble, and that which the best of God's saints and servants have been severely exercised with. The spirit of man, of the greatest of men, will not always sustain the infirmity, but will droop and sink under it; who then can bear a wounded spirit? Thus greatly may good men be afflicted, and such dismal apprehensions may they have concerning their afflictions, and such dark conclusions may they be ready to make concerning the issue of them, through the power of melancholy, and the weakness of faith.

He complained most of God's displeasure. Even the children of God's love may sometimes apprehend themselves children of wrath, and no outward trouble can lie so hard upon them as that apprehension. It added to his affliction, that his friends deserted him. He looked upon his case as helpless and deplorable; I am shut up a close prisoner, under Divine wrath, no way open of escape. He therefore lies down under his troubles.

Probably the psalmist meant to describe his own case, yet the language leads our thoughts to Christ, and the history of his closing scene forms the best comment upon it. Thus we are called to look unto Jesus, wounded and bruised for our iniquities. While his life drew nigh unto the grave, his soul was full of troubles. His bonds and stripes, his agonizing death, the treachery, cowardice, and neglect of his disciples, while his enemies compassed him about, and all the hosts of hell assaulted his soul—these were a mass of sufferings beyond what human language can express. But the wrath of God infused the greatest bitterness into his cup. This weighed him down into darkness and the deep.

Ver. 10—18. In these verses the psalmist pleads with God concerning the deplorable condition he was in. Shall those that are dead and buried rise up to praise thee? Thy faithfulness to thy promise, shall that be told in destruction? Departed souls may indeed know God's wonders, and declare his faithfulness, justice, and loving-kindness; but deceased bodies can neither receive God's favours in comfort, nor return them in praise. He thus pleads with God for speedy relief; Lord, thou art good, thou art faithful, thou art righteous; but if my deliverance be not hastened, it will come too late; for I shall be past relief, dead, and not capable of receiving any comfort, very shortly. Job often pleaded this.

He resolves to continue instant in prayer, and the more so, because the deliverance was deferred. Though our prayers be not answered immediately, yet we must not therefore give over praying. He would prevent, that is, go before his usual hour of prayer. The greater our afflictions are, the more solicitous and serious we should be in prayer. My prayer shall present itself before thee, and shall not stay for the encouragement of the beginning of mercy, but reach out with faith and expectation, before the day dawns.

He will humbly reason with God concerning the abject, afflicted condition he was now in. He speaks it with wonder that God should cast off one that was resolved not to cast him off. Nothing grieves a child of God so much as God's hiding his face from him; nor is there any thing he so much dreads as God's casting off his soul. If the sun be clouded,

that darkens the earth; but if the sun should abandon the earth, what a dungeon would it be!

He will humbly repeat the same complaints until God have mercy on him. Two things he represents to God.

1. That God was a terror to him. He had continual, frightful apprehensions of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and the consequences of that wrath. Even those that are designed for God's favours, may, for a time, suffer his terrors. The psalmist here tells us what he means by God's terrors, even his fierce wrath. See what dreadful impressions those terrors made, and how deep they wounded him.

2. That no friend he had in the world was a comfort to him. Some are dead, others at a distance, and perhaps many unkind. Next to the comforts of religion are those of friendship; and to those who have had friends, but have lost them, the calamity is the more grievous. If our friends are put far from us by scattering providences, nay, if by death our acquaintances are removed into darkness, we have reason to look upon it as a sore affliction, but must acknowledge and submit to the hand of God in it.

Such was the calamitous state of a wise and good man; he was so surrounded with terrors, that he could find no place of shelter. But the pleas here used were peculiarly suited to Christ.

We are not to imagine that the holy Jesus suffered for us only at Gethsemane and on Calvary. His whole life was one continued suffering; a scene of labour and sorrow, of contradiction and persecution, he was afflicted as never man was, from his youth up. He was prepared for that death which he tasted of through life. He saw fierce wrath waiting to cut him off; the terror of the Almighty threatened to overwhelm his soul. He was entirely forsaken and left alone. No man could share in the sufferings by which other men were to be redeemed. All forsook him, and fled. Oftentimes, O blessed Jesus, do we forsake thee; but do not thou forsake us, nor take thy Holy Spirit from us.—(32.)

The Redeemer cried day and night unto his heavenly Father. In his agony he prayed more earnestly, and his prayer was heard and accepted, Heb. 5. 7; though he seemed to be cast off, and no more remembered. Yet there was no reason for the Saviour's unequalled sorrows in his

own conduct. Perfectly free from sin, and infinitely dear to his heavenly Father, he was wounded for our transgressions, and bare the heavy wrath our sins deserved. Let us then consider what would have been our case, had we been left to bear this wrath of God for ourselves, and what those will endure who neglect so great salvation—consider this, that we may know the value of the Saviour's love.

And should any of us feel anguish or temptations, should we suffer tribulation with such bitter circumstances as to be constrained to apply to ourselves the expressions of this psalm, still let us remember that we are not yet in the depths of hell, and may therefore still seek and hope in the God of salvation. Let us persevere in earnest prayer to God, pleading the glory to himself from his saving us. Let us remember that relief comes from him alone. Let us not yield to impatience or despair, but still expect comfort after the darkest and most long-continued temptations. Even if we conclude one prayer after another without encouragement, let us begin again; we shall at length prevail. And if spared such dreadful trials, let us bless the Lord, while we feel and pray for our tempted, afflicted brethren.

10—12. These verses contain, in reality, the most powerful plea that Christ himself, in his prayers to the Father, could urge for the resurrection of the dead; namely, that otherwise man would be deprived of his salvation, and God of the glory thence accruing.—*Bp. Horne.*

PSALM LXXXIX.

The psalmist first recounts God's former favours, and then, with the consideration of them, dwells upon the present grievances. (1.) He gives glory to God, and takes comfort, mentioning God's mercy and truth, and his covenant, ver. 1—4. (2.) He adores the glory and perfection of God, ver. 4—14. (3.) He speaks of the happiness of those that are admitted into communion with him, ver. 15—18. (4.) He builds all his hope upon God's covenant with David, as a type of Christ, ver. 19—37. (5.) In the melancholy part of the psalm, he laments the calamitous state of the prince and royal family, ver. 38—49, and then concludes with prayer for redress, ver. 50—52.

* Ver. 1—4. The psalmist, being about to deplore the apparent failure of the covenant made with David, begins with praising the mercies and faithfulness of

God. Though our expectations are in some particular instances disappointed, yet God's promises are established in the very heavens, that is, in his eternal counsels; they are above the changes of this lower region, and out of the reach of the opposition of hell and earth. His expressions are literally fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ. The psalmist then speaks in the name of Jehovah himself, declaring the purport of this covenant with his chosen servant David and his posterity.

Faith in the boundless and everlasting mercy and truth of God may bring comfort even in the deepest adversity. His covenant is most firmly ratified, and his throne is established for ever. This has its accomplishment only in Christ, of the seed of David, who lives for ever, to whom God has given the throne of his father David, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end.

Ver. 5—14. These verses are full of the praises of God. God is praised by the angels above. The works of God are wonders, even to those who are best acquainted with them; the more God's works are known, the more they are admired.

God is praised by the assemblies of his saints on earth; and though they fall so far short of the praises of angels, yet God is pleased to take notice of them, and accept of them. Let every saint praise him, but especially the congregation of saints; when they come together, let them join in praising God; the more the better, it is the more like heaven. God must be had in reverence of all that attend him as his servants, or approach him upon any particular occasion, Heb. 12, 28.

To praise God, is to acknowledge him to be such a one that there is none like him. His thoughts and ways are infinitely above our comprehension, and our part is to adore the depths we cannot fathom, and to expect the blessings he has covenanted to bestow, though we can see no way in which they will be communicated. Surely then we should feel and express reverence when we assemble to worship God. But how little of this appears in our congregations! and how much cause we have for humiliation on that account!

That high and almighty power which smote Egypt, will to the end scatter the enemies of the church, while all who trust in his mercy shall rejoice in his name; for mercy and truth direct all he does.

He specifies the remotest parts of the world, the countries then little known; Thou hast created them, and therefore knowest them, takest care of them, and hast tributes of praise from them. Justice and judgment are the preparing of his throne, so some; the establishment of it, so others: the preparations for his government in his counsels from eternity, and the establishment in its consequences to eternity, all are justice and judgment.

Ver. 15—18. The psalmist, having largely showed the blessedness of the God of Israel, here shows the blessedness of Israel, especially as a type of the gospel Israel, consisting of all true believers, whose happiness is here described.

These verses may be called the believers' triumph. Though they are nothing in themselves, yet having all in Christ Jesus, they may rejoice in his name all the day. May the Lord enable us to do so. The joy of the Lord is the strength of his people; whereas unbelief dispirits ourselves, and discourages others. Though it steals upon us under a semblance of humility, it is the essence of pride.—(51.)

Happy are they who so know the joyful sound of the gospel as to obey it; who experience its power upon their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives. Their present safety and eternal happiness are secured in the favour of Him, whom they trust as a Saviour, love as a Father, and obey as a King. We then walk in the light of the Lord, when we fetch all our comforts from God's favour, and are very careful to keep in his love.

They that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and make God their exceeding joy, have enough to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs; therefore their joy is full, 1 John 1. 4, and it is constant. Christ is the Holy One of Israel; and in nothing was that peculiar people more blessed than that He was born King of the Jews. This blessedness of God's Israel was hard to reconcile to their calamities.

Ver. 19—37. After Saul was rejected, the Lord chose David from among the people, and endued him with courage and might, that he might exalt him to the throne, and lay help upon him for the deliverance and prosperity of Israel; but especially that he might be a type of Christ, that mighty One, who in human

nature is chosen and qualified to fill the throne of the Mediator. The Lord, by Samuel, anointed David with the holy oil out of the sanctuary, not only as an emblem of the graces and gifts conferred upon him, but as a type of Christ, the King, Priest, and Prophet, anointed with the Holy Ghost, without measure.

David, after his anointing, was persecuted, but none could gain advantage against him; for the Lord made him victorious, established his authority, and made him more honourable than the kings of the earth. Yet all this was but a faint shadow of the Redeemer's sufferings, deliverance, glory, and authority, in whom alone these predictions and promises are fully accomplished. Infinite in power and love, as the eternal Son of God; and having become one of us, by assuming our nature, he is not ashamed to call us brethren. He is every way qualified for the great work he was to undertake, able to save to the uttermost; mighty in strength, for he is the Son of God; mighty in love, for he is able experimentally to compassionate those that are tempted. He is the mighty God, Isa. 9. 6. This is the Redeemer appointed for us, and who alone is able to accomplish the work of our salvation. He, in a peculiar manner, could cry unto the Lord, Thou art my Father, my God, and my strong Salvation, being made, even in our nature, higher than the kings of the earth.

God hath pledged the honour of his own holiness, that he will exactly perform the covenant made with Christ, whom David typified. So that the Saviour and his church shall remain as the sun and moon to the end of time, and continue a constant witness that the covenant with the Redeemer is fulfilled. The oath with which that covenant is ratified is intended to give those a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Let us then seek an interest in these blessings by the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, as the counterpart of the faithful record in heaven, of our names written in the book of life. Thus his church, as his spiritual seed, is secured in its privileges. And as the Lord, by various corrections, visited the posterity of David for their transgressions, so his people shall be visited with corrections for their sins.

Their being related to Christ shall not excuse them from being called to an

account. But observe what affliction is to God's people. It is but a rod, not a sword; it is for correction, not for destruction. This denotes gentleness in the affliction; it is such a rod as men use in correcting their children; and it denotes a design of good in, and by the affliction, such a rod as yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. It is a rod in the hand of God, who is wise, and knows what he does, gracious, and will do what is best. It is a rod which they shall never feel the smart of, but when there is need; If they break my law, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, but not else. Then it is requisite, that they may be humbled and reduced.

19. The reading of all the versions, and of many Hebrew manuscripts, is, "Thy holy ones," the prophets.

Ver. 38—52. In these verses we have a very melancholy complaint of the deplorable state of David's family, which the psalmist thinks hard to be reconciled to the covenant God made with David. Sometimes it is no easy thing to reconcile God's providences with his promises, and yet we are sure they are reconcilable, for God's works fulfil his word, and never contradict it. We misconstrue the rebukes of Providence, if we think they make void the covenant. When the great Anointed One, Christ himself, was upon the cross, God seemed to have cast him off, yet did not make void his covenant, for that was established for ever.

The honour of the house of David was lost. Thrones and crowns are tottering things, and are often laid in the dust; but there is a crown of glory reserved for Christ's spiritual seed, which fadeth not away. The enemies talk insolently; nay, every one helps forward the calamity. But if the enemies of the church lift up their hand against it, we must see God setting up their hand, for they could have no power, unless it were given them from above. It was disabled to help itself. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them. It is ready to be cut off, like a young man in the flower of his age.

From all this complaint let us learn what work sin makes with families, noble families, with families in which religion has been uppermost. When posterity degenerates, it falls into disgrace, and iniquity stains their glory. How apt we are to place the promised honour and happiness of the church in something external,

and to think the promise fails, and the covenant is made void, if we are disappointed of that; a mistake which we now are inexcusable if we fall into, since our Master has so expressly told us that his kingdom is not of this world.

They plead with God for mercy,

1. The long continuance of the trouble. It seemed an eternal night when God was withdrawn. Shall thy wrath burn like fire? What is hell, but the wrath of God burning for ever?

2. The shortness of life, and the certainty of death; Lord, return thou, in mercy to us, remembering how short my time is, and how sure the period of my time. Those whose days are few and full of trouble may yet glorify God, and do some good, may keep communion with God; then they are not made in vain.

3. The next plea is taken from the kindness God had for his servant David, and the covenant he made with him. God's unchangeableness and faithfulness assure us that He will not cast off those whom he has chosen and covenanted with.

4. The insolence of the enemies, and the injury done to God's anointed. The abuses done to them reflected upon their Master, since for serving him they were reproached. They have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. Or, if we apply it to Christ, the Lord's Messiah, they reproached the Jews with his footsteps, the slowness of his coming. They reproached the delays of the Messiah. They called him, He that should come; but, because he did not now come to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, they told them he would never come. The scoffers of the latter days, in like manner, reproach the footsteps of the Messiah, when they ask, Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. 3. 3. Also the reproaching of the footsteps of the anointed, some refer to the serpent's bruising of the heel of the Seed of the woman; or, to the sufferings of Christ's followers, who tread in his footsteps, and are reproached for his name's sake.

The records of the Lord's dealings with the family of David, show us his dealings with his church, and with believers. Grievous may be their afflictions and distress, but he will not finally cast them off. But let us rejoice with trembling; self-deceivers abuse the doctrine, and others by a careless walk bring themselves into darkness and distress. Yet let the true believer rely on it for encouragement

in the path of duty, and in bearing the cross. Let us plead with the Lord his former mercies to his people, and the promises of his word.

The psalm concludes with praise, even after this sad complaint. The more others blaspheme God, the more we should bless him. Thus he corrects himself for quarrelling with God's providences, and questioning his promises. Let both these sinful passions be silenced with the praises of God. Though the glory of David's house be stained, this shall be our comfort, that God is blessed for ever, and his glory cannot be eclipsed. Here is a double Amen. It is so, God is blessed for ever, Amen; and be it so, let God be blessed for ever, Amen. The psalmist began the psalm with thanksgiving, before he made his complaint; and he concludes it with praise. They who give God thanks for what he *has done*, may give him thanks also for what he *will do*; God will follow those with his mercies, who, in a right manner, follow him with their praises.

PSALM XC.

It is supposed that this psalm refers to the sentence passed on Israel in the wilderness, Numb. 14. In it, (1.) Moses comforts himself and his people with the eternity of God, and their interest in him, ver. 1, 2. He humbles himself and his people with the consideration of the frailty of man, ver. 3—6. (2.) He submits himself and his people to the righteous sentence of God passed upon them, ver. 7—11. (3.) He commits himself and his people to God, by prayer for Divine mercy and grace, and the return of God's favour, ver. 12—17. It is very applicable to the frailty of human life in general. These sentiments are never unsuitable to our situation in this world; but they are peculiarly adapted to the case of a pious man in the time of pestilence, when thousands are swept away on every side.

Ver. 1—6. We are taught to give God the praise of his care concerning his people at all times, ver. 1. Canaan was a land of pilgrimage to the patriarchs; but then God was their Habitation, and, wherever they went, they were at home, at rest in him. Egypt had been a land of bondage to the Israelites for many years, but even then God was their Refuge; in him that poor, oppressed people lived, and were kept in

being. The favour and protection of God are the only sure rest and comfort of the soul in this evil world, and in Christ Jesus he is the refuge and dwelling-place to which we may repair.

We are to give glory to God, v. 2, whose existence has neither its commencement nor its period with time, nor is measured by the successions and revolutions of it; but is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time. We are dying creatures, and all our comforts in the world are dying comforts, but God is an everliving God, and they shall find him so who have him for theirs.

We must own God's absolute sovereign dominion over man, ver. 3. When God is, by sickness, or other afflictions, turning men to destruction, he does thereby call men to return unto him, that is, to repent of their sins, and live a new life. Sometimes he wonderfully recovers them; for God brings down to the grave, and brings up. When God turns men to destruction, it is according to the general sentence passed upon all, which is, Let the body return to the earth as it was, Gen. 3. 19, and let the soul return to God who gave it, Eccl. 12. 7.

We are to acknowledge the infinite disproportion there is between God and men, ver. 4. Some of the patriarchs lived near a thousand years; but what is their long life to God's eternal life? It is soon past, like a watch, or a few hours of the night. A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity; betwixt a minute and a million of years there is some proportion, but betwixt time and eternity there is none. All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are as present to the Eternal Mind, as what was done yesterday, or in the last hour, is to us, and more too. God will say, at the great day, to those whom he has turned to destruction, Return, arise, ye dead. It is a long time since that was expected, and it is not yet come. Let that be no difficulty; for a thousand years in God's sight are but as one day, 2 Pet. 3. 8. The body and soul shall both return and unite again.

Observe the frailty of men, and their vanity, even at their best estate, ver. 5, 6. Their life is a dying life. They are continually gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity; as soon as we are born, we begin to die, and every day of our life carries us so much nearer

death; or we are carried away irresistibly, as with a flood of waters, which sweeps away all before it. Though God promised not so to drown the world again, yet death is a constant deluge. It is a dreaming life. Men are carried away as with a flood, and yet they consider not their own frailty, nor are aware how near they approach to an awful eternity. Like men asleep, they imagine great things to themselves, till death wakes them, and puts an end to the pleasing dream. Time passes unobserved by us, as it does with men asleep; and when it is over, it is as nothing. It is a short and transient life. Man does but flourish as the grass, which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither of itself: but he may be mown down by disease or disaster, as the grass is, in the midst of summer. All flesh is as grass.

Ver. 7—11. Moses here teaches the people of Israel to confess that righteous sentence of death which they were under, and which by their sins they had brought upon themselves.

They are here taught to acknowledge the wrath of God to be the cause of all their miseries. The afflictions of the saints often come from God's love; but the rebukes of sinners, and of good men for their sins, must be seen coming from the anger of God, who takes notice of, and is much displeased with the sins of Israel. We are too apt to look upon death as no more than a debt owing to nature; but it is not so: if the nature of man had continued in its primitive purity, there had been no such debt owing. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin.

They are taught to confess their sins, which had provoked the wrath of God against them, ver. 8. Secret sins are known to God, and shall be reckoned for. See the folly of those who go about to cover their sins, for they cannot do so.

They are taught to look upon themselves as dying, and passing away, ver. 9. It is applicable to the state of every one in the wilderness of this world. A year, when past, is like a tale when it is told. Our years, when gone, can no more be recalled, than the word that we have spoken.

Before Moses it was usual for men to live more than one hundred years; but since, few exceed seventy or eighty, and multitudes never come near it. We reckon those to have had a large share of life who live to be seventy years old;

and how short a time is that compared with eternity! Even their strength then is labour and sorrow, much more their weakness; for the years are come which they have no pleasure in. The sentence of death is gone forth, and cannot be changed, however the circumstances may vary. Yet how few understand or regard the power of his wrath, who is able to destroy body and soul in hell. Our whole life is toilsome and troublesome; and, perhaps, in the midst of the years we count upon, it is soon cut off, we fly away, and do not live out half our days.

They are taught by all this to stand in awe of the wrath of God, ver. 11. The angels that sinned know the power of God's anger; sinners in hell know it; but which of us can fully comprehend or describe it? Few do seriously consider it as they ought. Who knows it, so as to improve the knowledge of it? Those who make a mock at sin, and make light of Christ, surely do not know the power of God's anger. God's wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful, serious people have of it. God has not in his word represented his wrath as more terrible than it really is; nay, what is felt in the other world, is infinitely worse than what is feared in this. Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?

Ver. 12—17. They are here directed to pray for a sanctified use of the sad dispensation they were now under, ver. 12. We must live under a constant view of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days, as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with a double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle. Those that would learn this, must pray for Divine instruction, must beg to be taught by the Holy Spirit. We number our days to good purpose, when thereby our hearts are inclined to true wisdom, that is, to the practice of serious godliness. Also for the turning away of God's anger, ver. 13—send us tidings of peace to comfort us again after these heavy tidings. How long must we look upon ourselves as under thy wrath, and when shall we have some token given us of our restoration to thy favour? And for comfort and joy in the returns of God's favour, ver. 14, 15. They pray for the mercy of God, for they pretend not to plead any merit of their own.

Let us pray for early mercy, the seasonable communications of Divine mercy. Let us pray for the true satisfaction and happiness which are to be had only in the favour and mercy of God.

This would be a full fountain of future joys. It would be a sufficient balance to their former griefs. God's people reckon the returns of his loving-kindness a sufficient recompense for all their troubles. And they pray for the progress of the work of God among them, ver. 16, 17. In praying for God's grace, his glory must be our end; and we must therein have regard to our children as well as to ourselves. Let the grace of God in us, produce the light of good works. And then let Divine consolations put gladness into our hearts, and a lustre upon our countenances, and that also will be the beauty of the Lord upon us, as our God. They pray that he would prosper them in it. God's working, ver. 16, does not discharge us from using our utmost endeavours in serving him, and working out our salvation. But when we have done all, we must wait upon God for the success. We are so unworthy of Divine assistance, and yet so utterly insufficient without it, that we have need to be earnest; Yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it, and, in order to that, establish us in it.

Instead of wasting our precious fleeting days in pursuing the phantoms which elude our grasp, and leave the possessors for ever poor, we should employ ourselves in seeking the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance in heaven. Let us pray that the work of the Holy Spirit may appear in converting our hearts, and that the beauty of holiness may be seen in our conduct.

The church prays for the dawning of that glorious morn, when every cloud shall vanish at the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and night and darkness shall be no more. Then only shall we rejoice, and be glad all our days.—(32.)

PSALM XCI.

While the psalmist by faith takes God for his own refuge and keeper, he, to encourage others to do the same, (1.) Represents the extent and continuance of their happiness and safety, who have God for their refuge and dwelling-place, ver. 1—4. Their preservation from the malice and influence of the powers of darkness, both as to things temporal and spiritual, ver. 5—8. (2.) That they are the

charge of holy angels, and shall triumph over their enemies, ver. 9—12. Their possession of special favour from the Lord, and enjoyment of intercourse with him, here and hereafter, ver. 13—16.—(10.)

Ver. 1—8. All those who live a life of communion with God, are constantly safe under his protection, and may therefore preserve a holy security of mind, at all times, ver. 1. He that by faith chooses God for his guardian, shall find all in him, which he needs or can desire. It is the character of a true believer, that he is at home in God, returns to God, and reposes in him as his rest. It is the privilege and comfort of those who do so, that the Almighty shelters them from every thing that would annoy them, whether storm or sunshine. They shall not only have admittance, but a residence, under God's protection; he will be their rest and refuge for ever.

The psalmist applies this to himself, ver. 2. If Jehovah be our God, our refuge, our fortress, what can we desire, which we may not be sure to find in him? We know whom we have trusted. He encourages others to do likewise; not only from his own experience, but from the truth of God's promise. Those who have themselves found the comfort of making God their refuge, cannot but desire that others may do so.

Now here it is promised, that believers shall be kept from fatal mischiefs, ver. 3. This is often fulfilled in our preservation from those dangers which are very threatening, and very near, while yet we ourselves are not aware of them. We owe it, more than we are sensible, to the care of Divine Providence, that we have been kept from infectious diseases, and out of the hands of the wicked and unreasonable. The spiritual life is protected by Divine grace from the temptations of Satan, which are as the snares of the fowler, and from the contagion of sin, which is a noisome pestilence.

The security afforded by God's providence to those who trust therein, is compared to that shelter which the young of birds are sure always to find under the wings of their parent, Deut. 32. 11; Matt. 23. 37. The truth of God's word, wherein he promises to be our defence, is to the believer, his shield and buckler.—(32.)

They must needs be safe, who have God for their keeper. God protects

believers with the greatest tenderness and affection, and with the greatest power and efficacy. He will not only keep them from evil, but from the fear of evil, ver. 5, 6. When we are retired to our beds, and have made all as safe as we can about us, yet there is terror by night, from thieves and robbers, winds and storms, beside the creatures of fancy and imagination, which are often most frightful of all. There is also a pestilence that walketh in darkness. No locks or bars can shut out diseases, while we carry about with us in our bodies the seeds of them. There is an arrow that flieth by day; there is a destruction that waste that high-noon—even then we cannot secure ourselves. It was in the day-time that pestilence wasted, which was sent to chastise David for numbering the people, on occasion of which some think this psalm was penned. But here is great security promised to believers in the midst of this danger; Thou shalt not be afraid; God by his grace will keep thee from disquieting distrustful fear, that fear which hath torment, in the midst of the greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being causelessly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being unduly afraid. Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow; knowing that if it take away the natural life, yet it shall not prejudice the spiritual life, but shall be its perfection. O death, where is thy sting? It is also under Divine direction, and will hit where God appoints, and not otherwise. Whatever is done, our heavenly Father's will is done; and we have no reason to be afraid of that.

A particular providence often is concerned for the safety of God's people, Ezek. 9. 4. Not but what good men may fall in a common calamity, and by an epidemical distemper, but then they are taken away from the evil to come, and are delivered from a worse plague than that by which they fall, even the plague of their own hearts, the evil of sin.—(27.)

Believers shall be preserved in common calamities, in a distinguishing way, ver. 7. When multitudes die round about us, though thereby we must be awakened to prepare for our own death, yet we must not be afraid with any amazement, nor make ourselves subject to bondage, as many do all their life-time, through fear of death, Heb. 2. 15. The sprinkling of blood secured the first-born of Israel, when thousands fell. God's people shall see, not only God's promises fulfilled, but

his threatenings, ver. 8. It will aggravate the damnation of sinners, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the reward of the righteous, Luke 13. 28; it will magnify the salvation of the saints, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the destruction of the wicked, Isa. 66. 24; Ps. 58. 10. Then let sinners come unto the Lord upon his mercy-seat, through the Redeemer's name; and let those who have experienced his salvation, avow their confidence in him, and encourage others to trust in him also.

Ver. 9—16. Observe the promises that are sure to all those who have thus made the Most High their habitation. Whatever happens to them, nothing shall hurt them; though trouble and affliction befall thee, yet there shall be no real evil in it, for it shall come from the love of God, and shall be sanctified; it shall come, not for thy hurt, but for thy good, though, for the present, it be not joyous but grievous. The angels of light shall be serviceable to them, ver. 11, 12. This is a precious promise, and speaks both honour and comfort to the saints, nor is it ever the worse for having been quoted and abused by the devil in tempting Christ, Matt. 4. 6.

It denotes the great care God takes of the saints, in that the angels themselves shall be charged with them, and employed for them. They are able to bear up the saints out of the reach of danger, and they do it with all tenderness and affection. They keep the feet of the saints, lest they dash them against a stone, lest they stumble and fall into sin and into trouble. The powers of darkness shall be triumphed over by believers, ver. 13. Christ has broken the serpent's head, spoiled our spiritual enemies, Col. 2. 15; through him we are more than conquerors.

The christian is persuaded that if his eternal interests are safe, the Lord will manage all his temporal concerns, and preserve his life on earth, so long as it shall be good for him. For encouragement in this he looks unto Jesus. He contemplates the beloved Son of God, victorious over the hosts of foes which beset his road, in no degree entangled by any of Satan's snares, nor infected by the pestilence of sin, the contagious love of the world, or fear of man. He considers the Redeemer, upheld by the arm of the Lord, ministered unto by angels, trampling upon the head of Satan, and triumphing

over death. While he reflects that the Redeemer's conflicts, sufferings, and exaltation were all intended for the benefit of his true disciples, he is animated to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him. Relying on the truth and mercy of God, through the Saviour's atonement, he shelters his soul under his word; he hath set his affections on the Lord and given his heart to him, desiring to love him more and more; he lives by faith, and daily calls upon the Lord for all he wants. Dangers, temptations, fears, and troubles, make him more to prize his refuge and his rest. Thousands go on in sin, or fall away, around him, but he is preserved as by miracle. Often he experiences wondrous protection, and has the comfort to know that all the angels in heaven are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. He shall live long enough; he shall be continued in this world till he has done the work he was sent into this world for, and is ready for heaven; and that is long enough. Who would wish to live a day longer than God has some work to do, either *by* him or *upon* him? His chief fear is lest he should be drawn aside from the path of duty; he prays to be upheld therein, and to be restored, though with rebukes, if he wander. At length the conflict ends; he has done for ever with trouble, sin, and temptation, he is set on high and honoured, if not here, yet in heaven, where he will see complete salvation. This may be understood peculiarly of Christ, but applies also to his people. Let us pray that the Lord would visit our souls with this salvation, and this length of days, even for ever and ever.

PSALM XCII.

(1.) Praise, the business of the sabbath, is here recommended, ver. 1—3. God's works, which gave occasion for the sabbath, are here celebrated as great and unsearchable in general, ver. 4—6. (2.) The wicked shall perish, ver. 7, but God is eternal, ver. 8. God's enemies shall be cut off, but his people shall be exalted, ver. 9, 10. David's enemies shall be confounded, ver. 11, but all the righteous shall be fruitful and flourish, ver. 12—15.

Ver. 1—6. We are called upon and encouraged to praise God, ver. 1—3. It is our privilege that we are admitted to praise God, and have hope to be accepted in it. We must do it by showing forth

his loving-kindness and his faithfulness, in the morning, and every night; not only on sabbath-days, but every day; not only in public assemblies, but in private, and in our families; showing forth, to ourselves and those about us, his loving-kindness and faithfulness. We must give him thanks every morning for the mercies of the night, and every night for the mercies of the day; going out and coming in, let us bless God.

We have an example set before us in the psalmist himself, both to move us to, and to direct us in this work, ver. 4. Those can best recommend praise to others, who have themselves experienced the pleasantness of it. Has God made us glad, through the works of his providence for us, and of his grace in us, and both through the great work of redemption? Let us thence fetch encouragement for our faith and hope. God's counsels as much exceed the contrivances of our wisdom, as his works do the efforts of our power. His thoughts are above our thoughts, as his ways are above our ways, Isa. 55. 9; Rom. 11. 33.

We are admonished not to neglect the works of God, by the character of those who do, ver. 6. If there are so many who know not the designs of Providence, nor care to know them, those who through grace are acquainted with them, and love to be so, have more reason to be thankful.

However glorious the works of God in creation and providence are, or however we are supplied with temporal benefits, none of God's operations could give us cause of joy and triumph in him, if it were not for the great work especially commemorated by christians on his day, when He who died for our sins, rose again for our justification. And if distant views of this great Deliverer, so animated ancient believers, how should we abound therein, who enjoy the meridian light of the Sun of righteousness!

Ver. 7—15. It is not generally understood, that God grants prosperity to wicked men in awful displeasure; and their momentary flourishing is in order to their being destroyed for ever. Let us pity their misery, and pray for their conversion, while we seek for ourselves the salvation and grace of the gospel, that being daily anointed by the Holy Spirit, we may be exalted to behold and share the Redeemer's glory.

Verse 11, perhaps, has reference to

Christ, to his victory over Satan, death, and hell, the destruction of those that persecuted and crucified him, and opposed his gospel, and to the final ruin of the impenitent at the last day. They that rise up against Christ, will fall before him, and be made his footstool.

Grace is the anointing of the Spirit ; when this is given to help in the time of need, and is received, as there is occasion, from the fulness that is in Christ Jesus, we are then anointed with fresh oil. The trees of righteousness do not grow of themselves ; they are planted, not in common soil, but in paradise, in the house of the Lord. It is from his grace, by his word and Spirit, that believers receive all the virtue that keeps them alive, and makes them fruitful.

The flourishing of the righteous is lasting. Amidst tribulations and temptations they grow into strength of faith and depth of experience, becoming useful and fruitful. Let us then seek to be rooted in the courts of the Lord, that we may flourish, not merely in the leaves of outward profession, but in the substantial fruit of a holy useful life, and this more and more as we advance towards the close of our pilgrimage.

It is promised that they shall bring forth fruit in old age. Other trees, when they are old, leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace does not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work their best work. This indeed shows that they are upright ; perseverance is sure evidence of sincerity.

If we have made the Lord the Rock of our salvation, he will make it appear that there is no unrighteousness in him, by enabling us to go on with increasing delight and fruitfulness, until he transplant us to his courts above, there to grow, flourish, and be fruitful for evermore. He fulfils his covenant to all who make him the foundation of their hope, for there is no unrighteousness in him ; and though his promises were all made of his mere grace, yet being made, he cannot fail in the performance of them. All that ever trusted in God, found him faithful and all-sufficient, and none were ever made ashamed of their hope in him.

Let us think of the mercies of the Holy Ghost in all his quickening influences and gracious teachings, to lead us on the sabbaths to the ordinances of the Saviour,

there to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, and direct us into the patient waiting for Jesus Christ. May every sabbath which sheweth forth the Divine faithfulness, find our souls resting more and more upon the Lord our righteousness, testifying our earnest waiting for that everlasting sabbath of rest which is above, and which remaineth for the people of God.—(37.)

12. The palm claims the pre-eminence among the trees of Palestine, on account of its singular beauty and utility, on which account it is often referred to in the sacred scriptures, and was adopted as the symbol of Palestine. The contrast is very striking between the righteous, compared to this beautiful and lasting tree, and the wicked, ver. 7, compared to the grass, which in eastern countries is verdant but for a very short time, and then is dried up and wholly withered.

PSALM XCIII.

This psalm is a triumphant celebration of the government of Jehovah, and of Jesus our Redeemer, in the awfulness, strength, stability, and duration of it, ver. 1, 2. In his triumphant victories over all opposition, ver. 3, 4. In the faithfulness and certainty of his words, and the holiness of his courts, ver. 5.—(10.)

The Lord might have displayed his justice, holiness, and awful power alone, in his dealings with fallen men, but he hath been pleased to make choice of them for displaying the riches of his mercy, and the power of his renewing grace. In this great work, the Father hath given all power to his Son, the Lord from heaven, who, by his humiliation and sufferings, hath made atonement for our sins, and hath purchased our salvation. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, and not only can pardon, but deliver and protect all who trust in him.

Let us not fear the power of man, which is borrowed and bounded, but fear Him who has power to kill, and cast into hell. He reigns triumphantly. We have here a threatening storm supposed. It alludes to a tempestuous sea, such as the wicked are compared to, Isa. 57. 20. The heathen rage, Ps. 2. 1, and think to ruin the church, to overwhelm it. The church is said to be tossed with tempests, Isa. 54. 11, and the floods of ungodly men make the saints afraid, Ps. 18. 4. We may apply it to the tumults that are sometimes in our own bosoms, through prevailing

passions and frights, which put the soul into disorder, and are ready to overthrow its graces and comforts. If he arise and speak, they will tremble and desist, Mark 4. 39. We have an anchor to cast out in this storm, ver. 4; The Lord himself is mighty. Let this keep our minds fixed. The enemies of the church cannot disturb his rest or rule; they cannot defeat his designs and purposes. God is mighty to preserve. He can, when he pleases, command peace to the church, 65. 7, peace in the soul, Isa. 26. 3. The unlimited sovereignty and irresistible power of the great Jehovah are very encouraging to the people of God, in reference to all the opposition they meet with in this world, Ps. 46. 1, 2.

He reigns in truth and holiness, ver. 5. As God is able to protect his church, so he is true to the promises he has made of its safety and victory. His word is past, and all the saints may rely upon it. Whatever was foretold concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, must have its accomplishment in due time. Those testimonies upon which the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints was built, were very sure, and would not fail them. All his people ought to be conscientiously pure. God's church is his house; it is a holy house, cleansed from sin, consecrated by God, and employed in his service. The holiness of it is its beauty; nothing better becomes the saints than conformity to God's image, and an entire devotedness to his honour; this is their strength and safety. Where there is purity, there shall be peace.

Let us all carefully inquire whether this kingdom hath been set up in our hearts. Let us examine whether we so believe his testimonies, and depend on him for salvation, as to love and follow after that holiness which his precepts command, and his example displays.

PSALM XCIV.

This psalm speaks, (1.) Conviction and terror to the persecutors, ver. 1—11, showing them their danger and folly. (2.) Comfort and peace to the persecuted, ver. 12—23, assuring them, both from God's promise, and from the psalmist's own experience, that their troubles would end well, and God would, in due time, appear to their joy, and the confusion of those who set themselves against them.

Ver. 1—11. In these verses, we have a solemn appeal to God against the cruel oppressors of his people, ver. 1, 2. They have the prayers of God's people against them, who cry day and night to him to avenge them of their adversaries; and shall not he speedily? Luke 18. 3, 7.

We may with boldness appeal to him; for he is Judge, supreme Judge, Judge alone, from whom every man's judgment proceeds. He is just. There is a God, to whom vengeance belongs, who will certainly call them to an account. Let this encourage those who suffer wrong, to bear it with silence, committing themselves to Him who judges righteously. Those who see the glory of the Lord, as revealed in Jesus Christ, perceive the harmony between his justice and mercy.

They ask of God that he would glorify himself, and that he would mortify the oppressors. These prayers are prophecies, which speak terror to all the sons of violence. Observe the character of the enemies they complain against. Those are wicked indeed, and workers of the worst iniquity, who are cruel to the innocent, and hate the righteous. There will come a day of reckoning for all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against God, his truths, and ways, and people, Jude 15. God's people are his heritage; there are those that, for his sake, hate them, and seek their ruin.

Those whom they should protect from injury, they are most injurious to. Though the cry of their wickedness is very great and loud, though they rebel against the light of nature, and the dictates of their own consciences, yet they have the confidence to say, The Lord shall not see: thus denying God's government of the world; deriding his covenant with his people, and setting the judgment to come at defiance. They are here convicted of folly and absurdity, ver. 8.

It would hardly be believed, if we did not continually witness it, that millions of rational creatures should live, move, speak, hear, understand, and effect what they purpose, and yet act as if they believed that the God from whom they derive these powers could not perceive, or would not punish the abuse of his gifts.

The psalmist argues from the works of creation, ver. 9. Could he give, would he give, that perfection to a creature which he has not in himself? The powers of nature are all derived from the God of

nature: see Exod. 4. 11. He argues from the works of providence, ver. 10. Shall not we be under His correction, under whose government the whole world is. Another very probable sense of this is. He that instructs the nations, that is gives them his law, shall not he correct shall not he judge them according to that law? In vain was the law given, if there be not a judgment upon it.

He argues from the works of grace. He not only, as the God of nature, has given the light of reason; but, as the God of grace, has given the light of revelation, has showed man what is true wisdom and understanding; and he that does this, shall he not know? If all knowledge is from God, no doubt, all knowledge is in God. He knows all the thoughts of the children of men, and knows them to be, for the most part, vain; that the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts are evil, only evil, and that continually. Even in good thoughts there is an inconstancy, which may well be called vanity. It concerns us to keep a strict guard upon our thoughts, because God takes particular notice of them. Thoughts are words to God, and vain thoughts are provocations.

Ver. 12—23. The psalmist, having denounced tribulation to them that trouble God's people, here assures them that are troubled, of rest, 2 Thess. 1. 6, 7. He speaks comfort to suffering saints, from God's promises, and his own experience.

God's people shall get good by their sufferings, ver. 12. When he chastens them, he will teach them. The afflictions of the saints are fatherly chastenings, designed for instruction and improvement. That man may be pronounced blessed who, under the chastening of the Lord, is taught his will and his truths, from his holy word, and by the Holy Spirit.

When the teachings of the word and Spirit go with the rebukes of Providence, they bespeak men blessed, and help to make them so; for they are marks of adoption, and means of sanctification. It is not the chastening itself that does good, but the teaching, that is the exposition of it. They should see through their sufferings. There is a rest remaining for the people of God after the days of their adversity, which shall not last always. He that sends the trouble, will send the rest.

God is ordering peace for them at the

same time he is ordaining his arrows against the persecutors. Let God's suffering people assure themselves of this, that whatever their friends do, God will not cast them off; he will not forsake them, they are his inheritance, Rom. 11. 1. God's judgment, his government, looks sometimes as if it were at a distance from righteousness, while the wicked prosper, and the best men meet with the worst usage; but it shall return to righteousness again, either in this world, or in the judgment of the great day. He speaks comfort from his own experiences and observations, ver. 17.

In his distress he sought for help and succour. He looked, but there was none to save. When on the side of the oppressors there is power, it is no marvel if the oppressed have no comforter. He found succour and relief in God only. When other friends failed, in him he had a faithful and powerful Friend; and it is recommended to all God's suffering saints to trust in him. We are beholden not only to God's power, but to his pity, for spiritual supports; for unless he uphold us, our feet will slip in dangerous places, and if we have been preserved from falling into sin, or shrinking from our duty, we should give him the glory, and encourage our brethren.

He had a multitude of perplexed thoughts concerning the case he was in, concerning the course he should take, and what was likely to be the issue of it. The indulgence of such contrivances and apprehensions only increases anxiety and distrust, and renders our views more gloomy and confused.

Good men sometimes have perplexed and distressing thoughts concerning God; they are ready to doubt of his good-will towards them because of their sins; they fear that they shall perish by their corruptions, or that they shall dishonour the ways of God. They think concerning Christ, that he is the Saviour of others, but not of them, that he is not willing to save such as they are. They think concerning the work of the Spirit upon their hearts, calling it in question, fearing it never was begun. They have thoughts concerning their present and future state; how they shall get through the troubles and difficulties of this world, and pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Then let them look to the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel,

and the things of Christ brought home by the Spirit.—(27.)

If we spread our case before the Lord, and pour out our hearts before him, we shall find light arise in the midst of darkness, and Divine consolations to satisfy, calm, and even to delight our souls. This is the only, and it is the neverfailing way to comfort in this world.

The world's comforts give but little delight to the soul, when it is hurried with melancholy thoughts; but God's comforts will reach the soul, and will bring with them that peace and that pleasure which the smiles of the world cannot give, and which the frowns of the world cannot take away. God is, and will be as a righteous Judge, the Protector of right, and the Punisher of wrong.

God is his people's Refuge, to whom they may flee, in whom they are safe, and may be secure. He is the Rock of their refuge, strong, firm, impregnable, immovable, as a rock: natural fastnesses often exceed artificial fortifications. He will reckon with the wicked; that very mischief which they did and designed against God's people, shall be brought upon themselves. A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him, if God visit it upon him. May we be found joined with those who are sure to prevail for evermore.

PSALM XCV.

Of this psalm it is said expressly, Heb. 4. 7, that the day here spoken of is to be understood of the gospel-day, in which God speaks to us by his Son, in a voice which we are concerned to hear, and proposes to us a rest beside that of Canaan. (1.) We are here excited to praise God, ver. 1, 2, as a great God, ver. 3—5, and as our gracious Benefactor, ver. 6, 7. (2.) We are here taught and warned to hear God's voice, ver. 7, and not to harden our hearts, as the Israelites in the wilderness, ver. 8, 9, lest we fall under God's wrath, and fall short of his rest, as they did, ver. 10, 11.

Ver. 1—7. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise. It is the will of God, that when we give glory to him, as a Being infinitely perfect and blessed, we should, at the same time, rejoice in him, as our Father and King, as a God in covenant with us. And with

humble reverence, and a holy awe of him, ver. 6, as becomes those who know what an infinite distance there is between us and God, how much we are in danger of his wrath, and in need of his mercy.

Whenever we come into God's presence, we must come with thanksgiving that we are admitted to such favour. God is to be praised; we do not want matter, it were well if we did not want a heart. How great is that God, whose the whole earth is, and the fulness thereof; not only whose dominion it is, but in whose hand it is, as he has the actual directing and disposing of all. Whatever strength is in any creature, it is derived from God, and his being the Creator of all, makes him, without dispute, the Owner of all.

The Lord Jesus, whom we are here taught to praise, is a great God; the mighty God is one of his titles, and God over all, blessed for evermore. As Mediator, he is a great King above all gods; by him kings reign; and angels, principalities, and powers, are subject to him. By him, as the eternal Word, all things were made, John 1. 3, and it was fit he should be the Restorer and Reconciler of all, who was the Creator of all, Col. 1. 16, 20. To him all power is given both in heaven and in earth, and into his hand all things are delivered; to him we must sing our songs of praise, and before him we must worship and bow down. He is our God, ver. 7, and therefore it is expected we should praise him.

He is our Creator, and the Author of our being. Idolaters kneel before gods which they themselves made; we kneel before a God who made us and all the world; and who is therefore our rightful Proprietor; for his we are, and not our own. He is our Saviour, and the Author of our blessedness. He is here called the Rock of our salvation; not only the Founder, but the very Foundation, of that Work of wonder, on whom it is built. That Rock is Christ.

We are therefore his, under all possible obligations; we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand: all the children of men are so; his providence cares for them, and conducts them, as the shepherd the sheep. He preserves and maintains us, and our breath and ways are in his hand. The gospel church is his flock, Christ is the great and good Shepherd of it; Christians are led, by his hand into the green pastures

by him they are protected and well provided for, to his honour and service they are entirely devoted as a peculiar people, and therefore to him must be glory in the churches throughout all ages, Eph. 3. 21.

Their Creator is become their Shepherd; he sought them when lost and brought them to his fold; he now feeds them with tenderness and care. How then should they delight to celebrate his praises, and thank him for his unspeakable mercies! How should they embrace every opportunity of meeting in his courts to join their songs of praise with others!

Ver. 7—11. Observe the duty required of all those that are the people of Christ's pasture, and the sheep of his hand. He expects that they hear his voice, for he has said, My sheep hear my voice, John 10. 27. If you call him Master, or Lord, then be his willing obedient people. Hear the voice of his doctrine, of his law, and, in both, of his Spirit: hear and heed; hear and yield. Hear his voice, and not the voice of a stranger. Christ's voice must be heard to-day; this the apostle lays much stress upon, applying it to the gospel day. This day of opportunities will not last always; improve it therefore, while it is called to-day, Heb. 3. 13, 15. Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing. To-day, by faith accept the gospel offer; to-morrow it may be too late. In a matter of such vast importance nothing is more dangerous than delay.

The sin they are warned against, as inconsistent with the believing obedient ear, is, hardness of heart. The Jews believed not the gospel of Christ, their hearts were hardened; they were not convinced of the evil of sin, and of their danger by reason of sin, and therefore they regarded not the offer of salvation. They would not bend to the yoke of Christ; and if the sinner's heart be hardened, it is his own act and deed, he hardening it himself, and he alone shall bear the blame for ever. The example they are warned by is that of the Israelites in the wilderness.

Days of temptation are days of provocation: nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise, and despair of the performance of it, because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way. The more experience we have had of the power and goodness of God, the greater is our sin, if we distrust him. To tempt

him in the wilderness, where we live upon him, is as ungrateful as it is absurd and unreasonable. Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all our distrust of God. That is a hard heart, which receives not the impressions of Divine discoveries, and conforms not to the intentions of the Divine will, which will not melt, which will not bend. The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps. The murmurings of Israel were written for our admonition, 1 Cor. 10. 11.

While, therefore, the true people of God are excited to praise him, others should be called upon in the name of God, and by his authority, to obey his voice and accept his salvation. The abounding encouragements of the gospel should be set forth, as well as the terrors of the law. The concerns of their souls admit of no delay. Death may come to-morrow, and if the sinner will not hear the voice of God to-day, he may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Yet men in general delay and harden their hearts against present convictions. It is to be feared that even in our religious assemblies there are but few believers, as was the case in Israel when, as a nation, they were shut out from Canaan through unbelief. Men plunge into those pleasures and pursuits which do violence to their consciences, and increase their natural aversion to the truths and service of God. Thus they weary him with their contempt of his favour, their disregard to his displeasure, and their neglect of his salvation.

God is not subject to such passions as we are; but he is said to be very angry at sin and sinners, to show the malignity of sin, and the justice of God's government. That is certainly an evil thing, which deserves such a recompense as may be expected from a provoked Deity. It is as not only a purpose, but a decree; the oath cut off the thought of any reserve of mercy. God's threatenings are as sure as his promises.

Let us then take warning by the example of unbelieving Israel. Let us fear giving way to temptation, by presuming on the patience and mercy of God. Let us be careful not to sin on under means of grace, and against the conviction of our own consciences. Let us be aware of the evils of our hearts, which lead us to wander from God. Let us dread listening to prejudices or objections against the gospel, being averse to its salutary restraints,

and devising schemes of religion more suited to our pride and lusts. These are some of the methods by which Satan hardens many, even in our religious assemblies, to their everlasting destruction. Therefore let us all fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should be found to come short of it.

And there is a rest ordained for believers, who give up their hearts to God in the obedience of faith—it is the rest of justification, reconciliation, and peace with God, the rest of sanctification begun, and ceasing from their own works; the rest of everlasting refreshment, begun in this life, and perfected in the life to come. This is the rest which God calleth his rest.—(19.)

PSALM XCVI.

Here is, (1.) A call given to all people to praise God, to worship him, and give glory to him, as a great and glorious God, ver. 1—9. (2.) Notice given to all people of God's universal government and judgment, which ought to be the matter of universal joy, ver. 10—13.

As this psalm, with slight variations, is found in 1 Chron. 16. it is more than probable it was written by David on bringing the ark to Zion. Any alterations may have been made by Ezra on the rebuilding of the temple. In its most sublime reference, it doubtless belongs to Christ and the times of the gospel, when all nations were to come and worship before the Lord. In the Syriac it is headed, Of David, a prophecy of the advent of Christ, and the calling of the Gentiles to believe in him.—(47.)

Ver. 1—9. When Christ had finished his work on earth, and was received into his glory in heaven, the church began to sing a new song unto him, and to bless his name; and his apostles and evangelists to show forth his salvation from day to day, to declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

A new song is a song for new favours, for those compassions which are new every morning. A new song is a song of praise for the new covenant, and the precious privileges of that covenant. Let the subject matter of this song be the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus; that must be showed forth as the cause of this joy and praise.

Let day unto day utter this speech, that, under the influence of gospel devotion, we may daily exemplify gospel conversation.

All the earth is here summoned to worship the Lord according to his appointment. This indeed spake mortification to the Jews, but it gave a prospect of that which would redound to the glory of God, and to the happiness of mankind.

Now observe how the acts of devotion to God are here described. It is debt, it is tribute, it is what must be paid, and yet if it come from holy love, God is pleased to accept it as a gift. We must bring ourselves, in the first place; the offering up of the Gentiles, Rom. 15. 16. We must offer up the sacrifices of praise continually, Heb. 13. 15; must often appear before God in public worship. We must worship him in the beauty of holiness, as God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

In the midst of these calls to praise God, glorious things are said of him, both as motives to praise, and matter of praise.

Ver. 10—13. We are taught to hope and pray for that time, when Christ shall reign in righteousness over all nations; when the whole creation shall rejoice in him, and show forth his praise. Sin has given it a shock, and still threatens it; but Christ, as Redeemer, upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature.

Christ's government will be incontestably just and righteous. All the laws and ordinances of his kingdom shall be consonant to the rules and principles of eternal truth and equity, that is, to the rectitude and purity of the Divine nature and will. He shall rule in the hearts and consciences of men, by the commanding power of truth, and the Spirit of righteousness and sanctification.

His coming draws nigh; this King, this Judge standeth before the door; for he cometh, for he cometh! Enoch, the seventh from Adam, said so; Behold, the Lord cometh, Jude 14. Between this and his first coming many ages intervened, and yet he came at the set time, and so sure will his second coming be; though it is now long since it was said, Behold, he comes in the clouds, Rev. 1. 7; and he is not yet come: see 2 Pet. 3. 4, &c.

Let them be called upon to rejoice in this honour that is put upon the Messiah. The whole creation will have reason to rejoice in the setting up of Christ's

kingdom, even the sea, and the field; for as by the sin of the first Adam the whole creation was made subject to vanity, so by the grace of the second Adam it shall, some way or other, first or last, be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. 8. 20, 21. God will graciously accept the holy joys and praises of all hearty well-wishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity ever so mean. The sea can but roar, and how the trees of the wood can show that they rejoice we know not; but He that searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, and understands the language, the broken language of the weakest.

Or, the earth made fertile by heavenly influence, shows the work of grace on men here below; the field, with its manifold produce, displays an emblem of the fruit yielded by the seed of the word in the church; the trees of the wood, apt representatives of the trees of righteousness planted by the Lord, Isa. 61. 3. All these are by the prophet excited to join in thanksgiving to the Maker and Redeemer of the world.—(32.)

But Christ will come to judge the earth, to execute just vengeance on his enemies, and to fulfil his largest promises to his people. What then are we? Would that day be welcome to our hearts? Are we prepared to join in the joyful praises of his servants on earth, and in heaven? If this be not our case, let us now begin to prepare to meet our God, by seeking the pardon of our sins, and the renewal of our souls to holiness. If we are ready, let us bless his name, bear up under difficulties, and in our proper place, and doing our proper work, let us be as faithful servants, always expecting and desiring the coming of the Lord.

PSALM XCVII.

(1.) The Lord Jesus reigns, to the joy of all mankind, ver. 1, and his government speaks terror to his enemies; for he is a Prince of inflexible justice, and irresistible power, ver. 2—7. (2.) Comfort to his friends and loyal subjects arises from his sovereign dominion, the care he takes of his people, and the provision he makes for them, ver. 8—12. From this psalm let us be affected with the glory of the exalted Redeemer, and dread the lot of his enemies.

Ver. 1—7. The kingdom of Christ may be matter of joy to all; and it will be so, if it be not their own fault. Not only let the people of Israel rejoice in him, as King of the Jews, and the daughter of Zion, as her King, but let all the earth rejoice, for the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms. There is enough in Christ for the multitude of the isles to rejoice in; for though many have been made happy in him, yet still there is room.

All have reason to rejoice in Christ's government. There is a depth in his counsels, which we must not pretend to fathom; but still righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. All on earth are under his government; either he is served by them, or he serves himself by them. All the angels in heaven are so. The inspired apostle, from the Greek version of ver. 7, Let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. 1. 6, shows us that this psalm must be applied to the exalted Redeemer; angels, authorities, and powers being made subject unto him, 1 Pet. 3. 22.

Christ's government, though it might be matter of joy to all, will yet be matter of terror to some, and it is their own fault that it is so. This was fulfilled in the enmity of the unbelieving Jews to the gospel of Christ, and the violent persecution which they stirred up against the preachers and professors of it. These enemies are here called hills, ver. 5, for their height and strength, and obstinacy. They were the princes of this world, that crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. 2. 8; Ps. 2. 2.

The opposition which the Jews made to the setting up of Christ's kingdom turned to their own ruin. That wrath is here compared to consuming fire, which goes before him, and burns up his enemies. The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled at the presence of the Lord. The judgments of God, brought upon the enemies of Christ's kingdom, were such as all the world took notice of with terror. This was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans; and all the people, to this day, see his glory, in those lasting monuments of his justice, the scattered Jews.

Idolaters also were put to confusion by the setting up of Christ's kingdom. May those who have been so long serving dumb idols be convinced of their error, and of their folly; and be ashamed of their

idols: see Isa. 2. 20, 21. This is a prophecy of the ruin of those that would not be reformed and reclaimed from their idolatry; they shall be confounded by the destruction of paganism. The prayer and prophecy are still in force against anti-christian idolaters.

And surely this idolatry is no less criminal within the nominal church than among the heathen. The destruction of pagan Rome was but a prelude of the destruction of that antichristian power, which has far exceeded it in impiety and iniquity. The Lord Jesus will ere long come and put an end to idolatry of every kind.

7. "Worship Him." Whom? Jesus; so says the apostle, Heb. 1. 6, "All ye gods." His angels, so the Septuagint; and the apostle, "Let all the angels of God worship him."—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 8—12. The kingdom of the Messiah, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a dark side toward the Egyptians, and a bright side toward the Israel of God. The command, ver. 1, is, Let the earth rejoice; but it is only the sons of Zion and the daughters of Judah that do rejoice. All should bid the kingdom of the Messiah welcome, but few do so.

The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad, because God is glorified; and whatever redounds to his honour, is his people's pleasure. The exaltation of Christ, and the advancement of God's glory among men thereby, are the rejoicing of all the saints.

Care is taken for their safety. Those that pay allegiance to Christ as a King, shall be sure of his protection. Princes are the shields of the earth; Christ is so to his subjects; for, ver. 10, He preserves the souls of his saints; he preserves their lives as long as he has any work for them to do, and wonderfully delivers them out of the hand of the persecutors that thirst after their blood. But something more is meant than their lives; for they that will be his disciples must be willing to lay down their lives. It is the immortal soul that Christ preserves, the inward man, which may be renewed more and more when the outward man decays. He will preserve the souls of his saints from sin, from apostasy, and despair, under their greatest trials. He will deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one that seeks to devour them; he will preserve them safe to his heavenly kingdom, 2 Tim. 4. 18. They have therefore reason to be glad, being thus safe.

Provision is made for their comfort. Those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy prepared for them, which will be opened sooner or later, ver. 11. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are bid to expect tribulation in the world; they must suffer by its malice, and must not share in its mirth; yet let them know, to their comfort, that light is sown for them. What is sown will come up again in due time; though, like the winter seed, it may lie long under the clods, and seem to be lost and buried, yet it will return in a rich and plentiful increase. God's goodness shall be sure of a harvest in the appointed weeks. They that sow in tears, shall, without fail, reap in joy, 126. 5, 6. Christ told his disciples, at parting, John 16. 20, You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Gladness is sure to the upright in heart, to those only that are sincere in religion. The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. There is no serenity without lasting sincerity.

Let Zion's joy be a pure and holy joy; Ye that love the Lord Jesus, that love his appearing and kingdom, that love his word and his exaltation, see that ye hate evil, the evil of sin, every thing that is offensive to him, and will throw you out of his favour. A true love to God will show itself in a real hatred of all sin, as that abominable thing which he hates. Divine comforts should put the mouth out of taste for sensual pleasures.

There is a peculiar emphasis in this caution with reference to the events which appear to have been predicted, for it is well known that secular prosperity soon corrupted the visible church, and brought in evils which still remain; yet the souls of the faithful have been preserved in every age.

Let the joy terminate in God; let all the streams of comfort, which flow to us in Christ's kingdom, lead us to the Fountain, and oblige us to rejoice in the Lord: see Phil. 3. 3; 4. 4. Let it express itself in praise and thanksgiving; Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving, and particularly the holiness of God. It is God's holiness, which, above all his attributes, the angels celebrate. Sinners tremble, but saints rejoice at the remembrance of God's holiness, Ps. 30. 4.

Let us thankfully recollect that his

purity, justice, truth, and goodness are pledged to support and deliver all who trust in him. As he hates sin, yet freely loves the person of the sinner who believes in Christ, he will certainly make a final separation between the person he loves, and the sin he hates, and sanctify his people wholly, in body, soul, and spirit.

PSALM XCVIII.

This psalm is to the same purport with the two foregoing; it is a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, the setting of it up in the world, and the bringing of the Gentiles to it. It sets forth, (1.) The glory of the Redeemer, ver. 1—3. (2.) The joy of the redeemed, ver. 4—9. If they who saw Christ's day at a distance, and in the promise only, must rejoice and triumph thus, much more reason have we to do so, Heb. 11. 40.

Ver. 1—3. A song of praise for redeeming love is a *new song*, such a song as had not been sung before, a mystery which was hid from ages and generations. Converts sing a new song, very different from what they had sung. If the grace of God put a new heart into our breasts, it will put a new song into our mouths.

Let this new song be sung to the praise of God, in consideration of four things.

1. The wonders he has wrought, ver. 1. The work of our salvation by Christ is a work of wonder. If we take a view of all the steps of this from the first forming of the design, and the counsels of God concerning it before all time, to its completion, and its everlasting consequences when time shall be no more, we shall say, God has therein done marvellous things. The more it is known, the more it will be admired.

2. The conquests he has won. Our Redeemer has surmounted all the difficulties that lay in the way of our redemption, and was not discouraged by the services or sufferings appointed him. He has gotten the victory over Satan, disarmed him, and cast him out of his strong holds, has spoiled principalities and powers, Col. 2. 15, has taken the prey from the mighty, Isa. 49. 24. He has gotten a clear and complete victory, not only for himself, but for us also, for we through him are more than conquerors. He got this victory by his own power; there was none to help, none to uphold, none that durst venture into the service, but his

right hand and his holy arm. God's power and faithfulness, called here his right hand and his holy arm, brought relief to the Lord Jesus, in raising him from the dead, and exalting him personally to the right hand of God.

3. The discoveries he has made to the world of the work of redemption. What he has wrought for us he has revealed to us, and both by his Son. The gospel revelation is that on which the gospel kingdom is founded. Observe the subject of this discovery; his salvation and his righteousness, ver. 2. Salvation denotes the redemption itself, and righteousness the way in which it was wrought, by the righteousness of Christ. Or, the salvation includes all our gospel privileges, and the righteousness all our gospel duties; both are made known, for God has joined them together, and we must not separate them. Or, righteousness is here put for the way of our justification by Christ, which is revealed in the gospel to be by faith, Rom. 1. 17. He has plainly, openly showed it, not in types and figures, as under the law, but it is written so that he that runs may read it. Ministers are appointed to preach it with all plainness of speech. This discovery is made in the sight of the heathen, and not of the Jews only; for to the Gentiles was the word of salvation sent.

4. The accomplishment of the prophecies, and the promises of the Old Testament. God had mercy in store for the seed of Abraham, and had given them many and great assurances of the kindness he designed them; and in pursuance of this design, he raised up his Son Jesus to be not only a Light to lighten the Gentiles, but the Glory of his people Israel, for he sent him, in the first place, to bless them. God is said, in sending Christ, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, Luke 1. 72. It was in consideration of that, and not of their merit.

But it behoves us to inquire whether his holy arm hath gotten the victory in *our* hearts over the power of Satan, unbelief, and sin? If this be our happy case, we shall exchange all light songs of vanity for songs of joy and thanksgiving; our lives will join with our lips in celebrating the Redeemer's praise. This needful change is made known by the gospel. By the ministration of condemnation is shown the justice of the sentence against transgressors; by the ministration of

righteousness, the way is declared in which sinners may be justified.

Ver. 4—9. The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is here represented as a matter of joy and praise.

Let all the children of men rejoice in it, for they all have, or may have benefit by it. Again and again we are here called upon, by all ways and means possible, to express our joy in it, and give God praise for it. Let all this joy be directed to God, and expressed in a solemn, religious manner. We must rejoice before the Lord, whenever we draw near to him, Deut. 12. 12; before the Lord Jesus, and before him, not only as the Saviour, but as the King, the King of kings, the church's King, and our King.

Let the inferior creatures rejoice in it, ver. 7—9; for the coming of Christ, and the salvation wrought out by him, quite alter the property of the troubles and terrors of this world. The different orders of rational creatures in the universe seem to be described under these metaphors as rejoicing and exulting with every expression of delight in the reign of the great Messiah. The kingdom of Christ will be a blessing to the whole creation. Perhaps respect is here had to the new heavens and the new earth, which we yet, according to his promise, look for, 2 Pet. 3. 13; and this mention of his coming may principally refer to his second coming, when all these things shall be so dissolved as to be refined; then shall He come to judge the world with righteousness. Thus the subject of this general joy is, (as before in Ps. 96. 13,) the advent of Messiah to establish a kingdom of righteousness upon the earth. We expect his second advent to restore all things, to judge the world, to condemn his enemies, and to begin his glorious reign. Then shall heaven and earth rejoice, and the joy of the redeemed shall be full. In the prospect of that day all who are sanctified do rejoice, and even the sea, and the floods, and the hills would rejoice, if they could. Sin and its dreadful effects will not be utterly abolished, till the Lord come to judge the world in righteousness. And if all rejoice, why should not we? Seeing then that we look for such things, let us give diligence that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

PSALM XCIX.

To Israel pertained not only the promises, which they were bound to believe, but also the giving of the law, and the service of God, to which they were bound to attend, Rom. 9. 4. And this they are called to do in this psalm, where yet there is much of Christ; for the government of the church was in the eternal Word before he was incarnate; and the ceremonial services were types and figures of evangelical worship. The people of Israel are here required to praise God, and to worship before him, in consideration of, (1.) The happy constitution of the government they were under, both in sacred and civil things, ver. 1—5. (2.) Some instances of the happy administration of it, ver. 6—9. Let us exalt the name of God, as it is made known to us in the gospel.

Ver. 1—5. The foundation of all religion is laid in this truth, That the Lord reigns. God governs the world by his providence, governs the church by his grace, and both by his Son. We are to believe not only that the Lord lives, but that the Lord reigns. Let even the subjects of this kingdom tremble, for the old testament dispensation had much of terror in it; and then God was terrible in his holy places, even when he appeared in his people's behalf. But we are not now come to that mount that burned with fire, Heb. 12. 18. Now that the Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice: then he ruled more by the power of holy fear, now of holy love. Much more let the enemies of this kingdom tremble. Those that submit to him, shall be established, and not moved, 96. 10; but they that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ cannot be moved. The inhabitants of the earth have abundant cause to tremble, but the Redeemer still waiteth to be gracious. Let all then who hear, take warning, and seek his mercy.

God's kingdom, set up in Israel, is here made the subject of the psalmist's praise. We see what was the happiness of Israel above any other people, as Moses described it, Deut. 4. 7, 8, that they had God so nigh unto them, between the cherubims, and that they had statutes and judgments so righteous, by which equity was established, and God himself ruled

in Jacob; from which he infers this command to that happy people, ver. 5, Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool. The greater the public mercies are which we share in, the more the setting up of the kingdom of Christ ought to be the matter of our praise. The more we abase ourselves before God, the more we exalt him; and good reason we have to be thus reverent, for he is holy; and his holiness should strike awe upon us, as it does on the angels, Isa. 6. 2, 3.

Ver. 6—9. The happiness of Israel is here further made out by particular instances, with reference to those who were the most useful governors of that people, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, in the former of whom the theocracy or Divine government began; and in the last of whom, that form of government, in a great measure, ended, 1 Sam. 8. 7.

Now concerning these three chief rulers, observe the intimate communion they had with God. None other of the nations of the earth could produce three such men as these. They honoured him by their prayers. Samuel, though not among his priests, yet was among them that called on his name. They relied not on their own wisdom or virtue, but in every emergency had recourse to God; toward him was their desire, and on him their dependence. And by their obedience; they made conscience of their duty, and in every thing made God's word and law their rule, knowing that unless they did so, they could not expect their prayers should be answered, Prov. 28. 9.

God granted them the things which they called upon him for. They all wonderfully prevailed with God in prayer; miracles were wrought at their special instance and request; he communed with them as one friend converses with another, ver. 7.

They interceded for the people, and for them also they obtained many an answer of peace. This is here referred to, ver. 8. Thou wast a God that wast propitious to them, for their sakes, and sparedst the people at their request; then, when thou wast about to take vengeance of their inventions, when thy wrath was so highly provoked against them, that it was just ready to break in upon them, to their utter overthrow. These were some of the many remarkable instances of God's dominion in Israel, more than in any other nation,

for which the people are again called upon to praise God, ver. 9, and worship at his holy hill of Zion, on which he has now set his temple, and will set his King, 2. 6, the former a type of the latter. There, as the centre of unity, let all God's Israel meet, with their adorations, for the Lord our God is holy, and appears so, not only in his holy law, but in his holy gospel.

Our Prophet and High Priest, of infinitely greater dignity than Moses, Aaron, or Samuel, hath received and declared to us the will of the Father. He himself perfectly observed the Divine testimonies and ordinances, and then bare our sins in his own body on the tree; he continually pleads for us before the throne, and prevails for our pardon and acceptance. Encouraged by these glad tidings, we may call upon the Lord, and expect an answer of peace. But as nothing will prevent the ruin of impenitent sinners, so believers will surely smart for and by their own inventions, when they commit iniquity, though the Saviour's intercession prevents their final condemnation. Let us then not only exalt the Lord with our lips, but give him the throne in our hearts; and while we worship him upon his mercy-seat, let us never forget that he is holy, and abhors hypocrisy as much as profaneness and infidelity.

PSALM C.

The Jews say this psalm was sung with their thank-offerings. Here we are called upon to praise God, and rejoice in him, ver. 1, 2, 4. We are furnished with matter for praise; we must praise him, considering his being and relation to us, ver. 3, and his mercy and truth, ver. 5. These things are plain, and therefore the more fit to be the matter of devotion.

The psalm answers to the title, A psalm of praise. Redemption from the bondage of sin and Satan forms the great benefit for which, above all, we should bless God, and in which we should rejoice before him. Assuredly the inhabitants of all lands will, ere long, come and make a joyful noise before God our Saviour. This song of praise should be considered as a prophecy, and even used as a prayer, for the coming of that time when all people shall know that the Lord he is God, and shall become his worshippers, and the sheep of his pasture.

God needs not us, nor any thing we have or can do; but it is his will that we should devote ourselves to his service, and that we should come before his presence in the ordinances he has appointed, and in which he has promised to manifest himself. In all acts of religious worship, whether in secret or in our families, we come into God's presence, and serve him; but it is in public worship especially, that we enter into his gates, into his courts.

Great encouragement is given us, in worshipping God, to do it cheerfully. Gospel worshippers should be joyful worshippers; if we serve God in uprightness, let us serve him with gladness; we must be willing and forward to it; glad when we are called to go up to the house of the Lord, 122. 1, looking upon it as the comfort of our lives to have communion with God; approaching to God, in every duty, as to God our exceeding Joy, 43. 4. We must in every thing give thanks; in every ordinance, as well as in every providence.

If, when we strayed like wandering sheep, he has brought us again to his fold, we have indeed abundant cause to enter into his courts with praise, to be thankful to him, and to bless his name. And, as his truth and mercy endure for ever, sinners of every land may be invited to partake of his salvation.

The matter of praise, and motives to it, are very important. Know ye what God is in himself, and what he is to you. Know it; consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him. Let us know concerning the Lord Jehovah, 1. That the Lord he is God, the only living and true God; he is a Being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, the Fountain of all being; he is God. 2. That he is our Creator. He is the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. 3. That therefore he is our rightful Owner. Because God made us, and not we ourselves, therefore we are not our own, but his. His we are, as some read it; to be actuated by his power, disposed of by his will, and devoted to his honour and glory. 4. That he is our sovereign Ruler; We are his people or subjects, and he is our Prince, who gives law to us, and will call us to an account for whatever we do. 5. That he is our bountiful Benefactor; we are not only his sheep, whom he is entitled to, but the sheep of his pasture, whom he takes care

of; the flock of his feeding. He who made us, maintains us, and gives us all good things richly to enjoy. 6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and goodness. The Lord is good, and therefore does good; his mercy is everlasting; it is a fountain that can never be exhausted; the saints, who are now the sanctified vessels of mercy, will be, to eternity, the glorified monuments of mercy. 7. That he is a God of truth and faithfulness. No word of his shall fall to the ground; the promise is sure to all the seed, from age to age.

The covenant of grace set down in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, with the legacy of so many rich promises, serving to strengthen the faith of every weak believer, makes the matter of God's praise and of his people's joys so sure, that how sad soever our spirits may be when we look to ourselves, yet we shall have matter of praising, thanking, and blessing God, when we look to his goodness and mercy, and to what he hath for our comfort said in the word of his everlasting truth.—(18.)

3. Or, "He hath made us, and his we are."

PSALM CI.

In this psalm we have David declaring how he intended to regulate his household, and to govern his kingdom, that he might repress wickedness, and encourage godliness. It is an excellent plan for the good government of a court, or the keeping up of virtue and piety, and, by that means, good order in it; but it is applicable to private families; it is the household's psalm. It instructs all that are in any sphere of power, whether larger or narrower, to use their power so as to make it a terror to evil doers, but a praise to them that do well.

In the person of David, advanced to the throne of Israel, we hear the Messiah declaring how he intended to walk and to govern his household the church; also describing the qualifications he should require in his ministers and servants.—(32.)

The chosen subject of the psalm is God's mercy and judgment. God's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed—mercy and judgment. God has set the one over against the other, and appointed them as showers and sunshine. It was so with David and his

family. When God in his providence exercises us with a mixture of mercy and judgment, we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to God for both. Whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and sing praises to him. Family mercies and family afflictions are both of them calls to family religion.

Those who are in public stations, are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; nay, rather they are more concerned to set a good example of ruling their own houses well, 1 Tim. 3, 4 David resolves, 1. To act conscientiously, and with integrity. When we make the word of God our rule, and are ruled by it, the glory of God our end, and aim at it, then we walk in a perfect way with a perfect heart. 2. To act considerately, and with discretion. We must all resolve to walk by the rules of christian prudence, in the ways of christian piety. Here is a good prayer, O when wilt thou come unto me? It is a desirable thing, when a man has a house of his own, to have God dwell with him in it; and those may expect God's presence, that walk with a perfect heart, in a perfect way.

David meant to walk uprightly in the commandments and ordinances of God, as an example to his household and people. But he knew that his ability to perform his vow, and his comfort in his family and government, would depend upon the Lord's presence, he therefore prays for it with earnest desire.

He resolved to ~~practise~~ no evil himself. In all our worldly business we must see that what we desire is right and good, and that we never seek that which we cannot have without sin. He further resolves not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that were vicious. He will not countenance them, lest thereby he should harden them in their wickedness, and encourage others to do like them. He will not converse with them himself, nor admit them into his family, lest they spread the infection of sin.

When he comes to mention particulars, he does not mention such gross sinners as he was in no danger of admitting into his house; but he mentions those sinners who were less scandalous, but no less dangerous. He will have nothing to do with malicious people. A froward heart, one that delights to be cross and perverse,

is not fit for society, the bond of which is christian love. Nor with slanderers, those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbour's reputation. Many endeavour to raise themselves into favour by unjust representations of persons and things, which they think will please. But David not only will not hearken to them, but will prevent the preferment of those who hope thus to gain favour with him. Nor with haughty, conceited, ambitious people; none do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church, for only by pride comes contention. God resists the proud. Nor with false, deceitful people, that scruple not to tell lies, or commit frauds. Some great men try to serve their own purposes by such as are skilful to deceive; but David will make use of none such as agents for him. Herein David was a man after God's own heart, for a proud look and a lying tongue are things which God hates; and he was also a type of Christ, who will, in the great day, banish from his presence all that love and make a lie.

He resolved to put those in trust under him, that were honest and good. These faithful ones his eyes shall be upon, to discover them, and find them out. This was a good resolution of David. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sakes and their children's, to take servants into their families who they have reason to hope fear God. The Son of David had his eyes upon the faithful in the land; his secret is with them, and they shall dwell with him. Saul chose servants for their goodness, 1 Sam. 8. 16, but David for their goodness.

Ministers, heads of families, and all in the superior stations of life, have an important duty in this matter. Their example, influence, and the due exercise of their authority, would have a good effect if they would adopt David's resolutions; or rather, if they would follow Christ's example. It is true that of ourselves we are not sufficient for such services, but God's grace and blessing would crown our endeavours with success.

He resolved to extend his zeal to the reformation of the country. He would be forward and zealous in promoting the reformation of manners, and suppression of vice. That which he aimed at, was, not only the securing of his own government, and the peace of the country, but the honour of God in the purity of his

church. It is the interest of the city of the Lord to be purged from wicked doers, who both blemish it, and weaken it; and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can, in their places, toward so good a work. And let us recollect that if we refuse to obey Christ's command, and to copy his example, while we call him our Lord and Master, he will treat us as hypocrites and liars, exclude us from his family, and drive us from his presence as workers of iniquity.

Let every one be zealous and diligent to reform his own heart and ways, and to do this early, ever mindful of that future most awful morning, when the King of righteousness shall cut off with the sword of judgment all wicked doers from that city of Jehovah, the new and heavenly Jerusalem.—(32.)

5. A slandering tongue is called a triple tongue by the Jews, because, as they say, it kills three persons; him that carries the slander, him that receives it, and him of whom it is related.—*Gill.*

PSALM CII.

It is clear, from the application of ver. 25—27, to Christ, Heb. 1. 10—12, that this psalm has reference to the days of the Messiah; it speaks either of his affliction, or of the afflictions of his church for his sake. In the psalm, we have, (1.) A sorrowful complaint which the psalmist makes either for himself, or in the name of the church, of great afflictions which were very pressing, ver. 1—11. (2.) Encouragement by considering the Divine perfections, and by expecting the performance of God's promises to his church in answer to the prayers of his people, for their comfort and the conversion of the heathen, ver. 12—22, (3.) And for the continuance of his church, ver. 23—28.

Ver. 1—11. This psalm was composed by one that was himself afflicted with the church and for it, and is intended for the use of others that may be in the like distress; for whatsoever things were written before time, were written designedly for our use. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but here, as often elsewhere, the Holy Ghost has put words into our mouths, Hos. 14. 2. Here is a prayer put into the hands of the afflicted: let them present it to God. It is very often the lot of the best saints in this world to be sorely afflicted. Even good men may be almost overwhelmed

with their afflictions. When our state is afflicted, and our spirits overwhelmed, it is our duty and interest to pray, and it is an ease to an afflicted spirit to unburden itself by an humble representation of its grievances and griefs.

The psalmist begs of God to take notice of his prayer in his affliction. It may be our hope that God will graciously hear us, because he has appointed us to seek him, and has promised we shall not seek him in vain. When troubles press hard upon us, God gives us leave to be pressing in prayer, yet with humility and patience.

He makes a lamentable complaint of the low condition to which he was reduced by his afflictions. If we are thus brought low by bodily distempers, let us not think it strange. He was very melancholy, and of a sorrowful spirit. He was always sighing and groaning, as one pressed above measure; he sought solitude, as melancholy people do. Those who do thus, when they are in sorrow, prejudice themselves, and know not what advantage they hereby give to the tempter. In affliction, we should sit alone, to consider our ways, Lam. 3. 28, but not sit alone to indulge an inordinate grief. His enemies were very obstinate and implacable. He fasted and wept under the tokens of God's displeasure. It was not so much the trouble itself that distressed him, as the wrath of God. We must view the hand of God both in lifting us up, and casting us down, and say, Blessed be the name of the Lord, who both gives, and takes away. He looked upon himself as a dying man; My days are consumed like smoke, which vanishes away quickly; they are like a shadow that declines, like the evening-shadow, a forerunner of approaching night. *

Ver. 12—22. Many exceeding great and precious comforts are here brought forward to balance the foregoing complaints. We are dying creatures, but God is an everliving, everlasting God, the protector of his church; we may be confident that it shall not be neglected.

The psalmist saw Jerusalem lying in ruins; but he felt assured that the time was near at hand when it should be rebuilt, and God's glory be manifested in it as in the days of old. To the gospel church he had also a further reference in his own mind, for the restoration of the Jews from Babylon was far from being

attended with the effects here foretold as following from their yet future restoration to their own land, and their final union with the church of Christ.—(61.)

The low estate of ~~eternal~~ godliness within the outward church also has often made her appear in a dying state, but the Lord will arise and have mercy upon her. Christians are often poor, destitute, and despised, sometimes they have groaned in prisons, appointed to death, ver. 20.

The prayers of God's people now seem to be slighted, and no notice taken of them, but they will be greatly encouraged. They are supposed to be in a low and broken state, enriched with spiritual blessings, but destitute of temporal good things; the poor, the weak, the desolate. This will bring them to their knees; destitute people should be praying people, 1 Tim. 5. 5. When we consider our own meanness and vileness, our darkness and deadness, and the manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to suspect that they will not be received in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an Advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law. The instances of God's favour to his praying people, though they are destitute, will be a lasting encouragement to prayer. And if we have the comfort of the experiences of others, it is fit that we should give God the glory of them.

Redemption is the subject of praise in the christian church; and the process of that great work is here described by images taken from the temporal deliverance and restoration of Israel. Look down upon us Lord Jesus! and bring us into the glorious liberty of thy children, that with the whole assembly of the redeemed, we may bless and praise thy name.—(32.)

13—15. God most assuredly has mercy in store for Zion. The Jews shall not always continue in their present degraded state; they shall be gathered from every quarter, and brought back to their own land. Their deliverances from Egypt and from Babylon attracted the attention of the nations round them; but this will surprise and astonish all the nations upon earth. Though they do not at present know the blessings they are to enjoy, for they look no further than to a temporal deliverance, there will be a turning to that Saviour whom now they hate. This will carry conviction to the minds of all, that Jesus is the true Messiah, the only and all-sufficient Saviour of the whole world.—Simeon.

Ver. 23—28. We may here observe the imminent danger that the Jewish

church was in, of being quite extirpated and cut off by the captivity in Babylon, ver. 23. This the psalmist speaks of as in his own person, and it is very applicable to our common afflictions. Bodily distempers soon weaken our strength in the way; when in the midst of our days, our strength is weakened, what can we expect but that the number of our months should be cut off in the midst; and what should we do but provide accordingly? We must own God's hand in it, for in his hands our strength and time are; and must reconcile it to his love, for it has often been the lot of those that have used their strength well, to have it weakened; and of those that we think could very ill be spared, to have their days shortened.

Here is a prayer for the continuance of it, and a plea to enforce this prayer, taken from the eternity of the Messiah promised, ver. 25—27. The apostle quotes these verses, Heb. 1. 10—12. It is very comfortable, in reference to all the changes that pass over the church, and all the dangers it is in, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is likewise comfortable, in reference to the decay and death of our bodies, and the removal of our friends, that God is an everlasting God, and that therefore if he be ours, in him we may have everlasting consolation. To illustrate the eternity of the Creator; the psalmist contrasts it with the mutability of the creature.

See God's sovereign dominion over heaven and earth; he can change them as he pleases, and when he pleases, and see the constant changes they are subject to; but a portion in God is perpetual and everlasting; Thou art the same, subject to no change; and thy years have no end, ver. 27. Christ will be the same in the performance that he was in the promise.

There is a comfortable assurance of an answer to this prayer, ver. 28; The children of thy servants shall continue; the church shall continue from one generation to another. They that hope to wear out the saints of the Most High, will be mistaken: but as one generation of good people passes away, another shall come; thus the throne of Christ shall endure.

Do not let us overlook the assurances this psalm contains of a happy issue to all our trials. Though all things are changing, dying, perishing, here below; though in ourselves, in our friends, in our houses, in the church, in the world, all are like a

vesture folding up and hastening to decay, yet Jesus lives, and in that all is secure, for he hath said, Because I live ye shall live also.—(37.)

PSALM CIII.

This is a most excellent psalm of praise, and of general use. The psalmist, (1.) Stirs up himself and his own soul to praise God, ver. 1, 2, for his favour to him in particular, ver. 3—5. (2.) To the church in general, and to all good men, to whom God is, and will be just, and kind, and constant, ver. 6—18. (3.) And for his government of the world, ver. 19. He desires the assistance of angels, and all the works of God, in praising him, ver. 20—22. Let us seek to have our hearts affected with the goodness of God, and enlarged in love and thankfulness.

Ver. 1—5. The psalmist, about to utter a song of praise, endeavours to awaken and stir up his soul to the joyful task. He calls forth all his powers and faculties that every part of his frame may glorify its Saviour; that the understanding may know him, the will choose him, the affections delight in him, the heart believe in him, and the tongue confess him.—(32.)

In order to praise God, there must be a grateful remembrance of the mercies we have received from him; Forget not all his benefits. If we do not give thanks for them, we do forget them. O my soul! to thy shame be it spoken, thou hast forgotten many of his benefits; but surely thou wilt not forget them all, for thou shouldst not have forgotten any.

He furnishes himself with abundant matter for praise; Come, my soul, consider what God has done for thee. He has pardoned thy sins. This is mentioned first, because, by the pardon of sin, that is taken away which kept good things from us, and we are restored to the favour of God, which bestows good things on us. Think what the provocation was—it was iniquity, and yet pardoned; how many the provocations were, and yet all pardoned. He is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting.

He has cured thy sickness. The corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul, it threatens its death; this is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; it is all healed. God's work is perfect; if God take away

the guilt of sin by pardoning mercy, he will break the power of it by renewing grace. Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is made sanctification, 1 Cor. 1. 30.

The body experiences the melancholy consequences of Adam's offence, and is subject to many infirmities, but the soul is subject to as many. What is pride, but lunacy? What is anger, but a fever? What is avarice, but a dropsy? What is lust, but a leprosy? What is sloth, but a dead palsy? When Christ was upon earth he proved himself the Physician of men's souls by the cures he wrought upon their bodies. It is He alone who forgiveth all our iniquities, it is he alone who healeth all our infirmities. And the person who finds his sin cured, has a well-grounded assurance that it is forgiven.—(32.)

He has rescued thee from danger. A man may be in peril of life, by the power of his enemies; here also we experience the Divine goodness, ver. 4; from the destroyer; from hell, so the Chaldee; from the second death. The redemption of the soul is precious, we cannot compass it, and therefore are the more indebted to Divine grace that has wrought it out, to Him who has obtained eternal redemption for us: see Job 33. 24, 28.

He has not only saved thee from death and ruin, but has made thee truly and completely happy, with honour, pleasure, and long life. When God, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, recovers his people from their decays, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, then they may be said to return to the days of their youth, Job 33. 25.

Ver. 6—18. The psalmist had looked back upon his own experiences; here he takes notice of God's favour to others also. Truly God is good to all, ver. 6. He, one way or other, will plead the cause of those that are injured.

He is in a special manner good to Israel. He has revealed himself and his grace to them, ver. 7. Divine revelation is one of the first and greatest of Divine favours. God restores us to himself by revealing himself to us. He has made known his acts and his ways, his nature, and the methods of his dealing with the children of men, that they may know both what to think of him, and what to expect from him. Or, by his ways we may

understand his precepts, the way which he requires us to walk in ; and by his acts, or designs, (as the word signifies,) his promises and purposes as to what he will do with us. Thus fairly does God deal with us. He always has been full of compassion, and ready to forgive. It is in his nature to be so, ver. 8. Though he signify his displeasure against our sins by the rebukes of providence, and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief, yet he will have compassion. He will not always keep us in pain and terror, no not for our sins, but, after the spirit of bondage, will give the Spirit of adoption, ver. 9. How unlike are those to God, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to cease ! What would become of us, if God should deal so with us ?

He has not dealt with us after our sins. ver. 10. The scripture says a great deal of the mercy of God, and we all have experienced it. He has not inflicted the judgments which we have merited, nor deprived us of the comforts we have forfeited ; God's patience should lead us to repentance, Rom. 2. 4.

He has pardoned our sins. ver. 12. The immeasurable space of heaven is continually an emblem to us of the infinite mercy of God to those who repent of their sins and seek for his salvation, of the distance to which their guilt is removed ; while the compassion of a tender father represents the kindness of God.

The father pities his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them ; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them ; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them, Isa. 66. 13 ; pities them when they are fallen, and helps them to rise ; pities them when they have offended, and, upon their submission, forgives them ; pities them when they are wronged, and rights them ; thus the Lord pities them that fear him. See why he pities—For he knows our frame. He considers the frailty of our bodies, and the folly of our souls, how little we can do, how little we can bear ; in all which the tenderness of his compassion appears.

He has perpetuated his covenant-mercy, and thereby provided relief for our frailty, ver. 15—18. See here how short man's life is, and of what uncertain continuance : see Isa. 40. 6, 7. Man, in his best estate, seems somewhat more than grass, he flourishes and looks gay ; yet then he is

but like a flower of the field, which, though distinguished a little from the grass, will wither with it. The flower of the garden is commonly more choice, and, though in its own nature withering, will last the longer for its being sheltered by the garden-wall, and the gardener's care ; but the flower of the field, to which life is here compared, is not only withering in itself, but exposed to the cold blasts, and liable to be cropt and trod on by the beasts of the field. Man's life is not only wasting of itself, but its period may be anticipated by a thousand accidents. When the flower is in perfection, a blasting wind passes over it, and it is gone. Such is man ! God considers it, and pities him ; let him consider it himself, and be humble, dead to this world, and thoughtful of another : see 1 Pet. 1. 24.

God's mercy to his people, ver. 17, 18, will continue longer than their lives, and will survive their present state. Observe, they are distinguished from others by their characters as well as by their privileges. They join themselves unto the Lord according to his gracious covenant ; and while they trust in his mercy, they remember his commandments to do them.

The mercy which belongs to such as these, will last longer than their lives on earth, and therefore they need not be troubled though their lives be short, since death itself will be no shortening of their bliss. God's mercy is better than life, for it will outlive it. His righteousness, the truth of his promise, shall be unto children's children ; provided they tread in the steps of their forefathers' piety.

Ver. 19—22. God has secured the happiness of his peculiar people by promise and covenant, but the order of the world in general he secures by his providence. He that made all, rules all, and both by a word of power. He disposes all persons and things according to the counsel of his will, to his own glory.

If all are under God's dominion, all must do him homage. Let the holy angels praise him, ver. 20, 21. There is a world of holy angels who are ever praising him. They are able ; for they are mighty in strength. And they are willing as they are able ; they always behold his face, Matt. 18. 10, that they may take the first intimation of his mind. They are willing to do their work ; they do his commandments, ver. 20, nor do they delay. To

obey is better than sacrifice ; angels obey, but do not sacrifice. It is God's glory, that he has such attendants, but more his glory, that he neither needs them, nor is benefited by them.

Let all his works praise him. All his works, that is, all the children of men, in all parts of the world, let them all praise God ; and the inferior creatures too, which are God's works also. Such would have been *our* constant delight, if we had not been fallen creatures. Such it will in a measure become, if we are born of God ; such it will be for ever in heaven, nor can we be perfectly happy till we can take unwearied pleasure in perfect obedience to the will of our God.

When the soul associates itself with angels in ascribing glory to God, it is most disposed to turn inward upon itself and examine how far the best affections of the heart are lifted up to the Lord, acknowledging his boundless mercy and grace. Amidst all our contemplations let the feeling of each redeemed heart be, " Bless the Lord, O my soul."—(47.)

PSALM CIV.

Many great things the psalmist here gives God the glory of. (1.) The splendour of his majesty in the heavens, ver. 1—4. The creation of the sea, and the dry land, ver. 5—9. (2.) The provision he makes for the maintenance of all creatures according to their nature, ver. 10—18. (3.) The regular course of day and night, ver. 19—24, the wonders of the deep, ver. 25, 26, and God's sovereign power over all the creatures, ver. 27—32. And, (4.) He concludes with a firm resolution to continue praising God, ver. 33—35. This psalm has peculiar reference to the glory of God in creation, and the works of nature.

Ver. 1—9. With what reverence and holy awe does the psalmist begin his meditation with that acknowledgment, O Lord my God, thou art very great ! The majesty of God is here set forth by divers instances, alluding to the appearances which great princes covet to make.

Every object which we behold or reflect upon, reminds us to bless and praise the Lord, who is great, and arrayed with majesty, glory, and excellency, infinitely surpassing our comprehension. His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen by the things which he hath made.

God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. The Lord Jesus, the Son of his love, is the light of the world ; and heaven, the scene of his brightest manifestations, is the inheritance of the saints in light. The most sublime as well as the meanest agents in nature, are but so many instruments for the display of the Lord's uncreated and eternal majesty.—(47.)

5. " Who had founded the earth on her basis."

The foundations of a pendulous globe are its centre, upon which all the parts lean and are supported by it : see 24. 2.—*T. H. Horae.*

9. The experience of 4000 years hath taught us that where the Creator hath laid his commands, plain sand is a sufficient barrier for the waters, which once covered the earth in every part.—*Bp. Horne.*

Ver. 10—18. We may observe the wisdom, love, and power of the Lord, in the animal tribes, whereby they are rendered subservient to our comfort. When we reflect upon the provision made for all creatures, we should also notice the natural worship they render to him, ver. 12. Yet man, forgetful, ungrateful man, enjoys the largest measure of his Creator's kindness. To him is given all things richly to enjoy.

Hence fields covered with corn for the support of life, hence vines and olive trees, laden with fruits whose juices exhilarate the heart and brighten the countenance. Nor let us forget the spiritual blessings corresponding to these outward ones—the fruitfulness of the church through grace, the bread of everlasting life, the cup of salvation, and the oil of gladness.—(32.)

God takes care that his creatures shall have suitable habitations to dwell in. To men God has given discretion to build for themselves, but there are creatures which God more immediately provides a settlement for. Does God provide thus for the inferior creatures ; and will he not himself be a refuge and dwelling-place to his own people ?

Ver. 19—30. We are here taught to praise and magnify God for the constant succession of day and night. The shadows of the evening befriended the repose of the night, ver. 20. See how nearly allied those are to the disposition of the wild beasts, who wait for the twilight, Job 24. 15, and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness ; and compare to this the danger of ignorance and melancholy, which are both as darkness to the soul. When in either of these ways it

is night, then all the beasts of the forest creep forth; Satan's temptations then assault us, and have advantage against us. The roaring of the young lions, like the crying of the young ravens, is interpreted, asking their meat of God. Does God put this construction upon the language of mere nature, even in ravenous creatures; and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it be weak and broken groanings which cannot be uttered?

The light of the morning befriends the business of the day, ver. 22, 23; man goes forth to work, and do good. There is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, which man must apply to every morning, and which we must continue in till evening; it will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which no man can work.

As the earth is full of God's riches, well stocked with animals, and those well provided for, so that it is seldom that any creature dies merely for want of food; so is this great and wide sea, which God made not in vain, any more than the earth: all is abundantly replenished with useful treasures for the service of man.

In the midst of this discourse, the psalmist breaks out into wonder at the works of God, ver. 24. They are numerous, they are various, of many kinds, and many of every kind; and yet in wisdom hast thou made them all. God's works, though many, and of very different kinds, are all made in wisdom, and with the greatest exactness. The works of art, the more closely they are looked upon, the more rough they appear; the works of nature appear more fine and exact. They are all made in wisdom, for they are all made to answer the end they were designed to serve.

The face of the earth is renewed from day to day, by the light of the sun, which beautifies it anew every morning; from year to year by the products of it, which enrich it anew every spring. This, the Jews say, is to be applied to the resurrection, which every spring is an emblem of, when a new world rises out of the ruins of the old one.

Let us remember that death, which sweeps away the innumerable multitude of living creatures which people the earth, first entered by man's sin. And man alone lives beyond death. When the Lord takes away his breath, his soul enters on

another state of existence, and his body will be raised either to glory or to misery. May the Lord then send forth his Spirit, and new create our souls to holiness; and renew the face of the earth by the conversion of sinners to himself.

26. Several biblical critics, consider that the word Leviathan is used both for the crocodile and the whale, and that the latter is here meant.

Ver. 31—35. The glory of the Lord, shall endure for ever, ver. 31. It shall endure to the end of time, in his works of creation and providence; it shall endure to eternity, in the happiness and adorations of saints and angels. Man's glory is fading, God's glory is everlasting; creatures change, but with the Creator there is no variableness. We often do that which we cannot rejoice in, but wish undone again. God always rejoices in his works, because they are all done in wisdom; he rejoices in the works of his grace, his gifts and callings are without repentance. He is a God of almighty power, ver. 32. The burning mountains are emblems of the power of God's wrath fastening upon proud unhumiliated sinners. If an angry look and a touch have such effects, what will the weight of his heavy hand do, and the operations of his outstretched arm! Who knows the power of his anger? Who dares set it at defiance?

The psalmist will himself be much in praising God, ver. 33. And if meditation on the glories of creation be so sweet to the soul; what superior glory must appear to the enlightened mind, when contemplating the great work of redemption! There all the Divine perfections beam upon the soul, exciting astonishment, love, gratitude, and joy. There spiritual riches are found far more unsearchable than those treasures which supply the earthly wants of the whole visible creation. There alone can a sinner perceive ground of confidence and joy in God.

And can He who feeds a whole creation let a ransomed soul starve? While he with pleasure upholds all, governs all, and rejoices in all his works, let our souls, touched by his grace, meditate and praise. While obstinate sinners are consumed from earth and shut up in hell, may our hosannas and hallelujahs ascend to Him that loved us, and gave himself for us.—(10.)

PSALM CV.

Every time we come to the throne of grace, we may furnish ourselves out of

the word of God with fresh thoughts—so inexhaustible is the subject. In the foregoing psalm, we are taught to praise God for his wondrous work of common providence with reference to the world in general. In this, we are directed to praise him for his special favours to his church. The first fifteen verses of this psalm are in 1 Chron. 16. 7, &c. (1.) A solemn call to Israel to praise, glory in, seek and serve the Lord, ver. 1—7. (2.) A narrative of his gracious dealings with them from the call of Abraham, to the end of their sojourn in Egypt, ver. 8—23. (3.) Their deliverance from Egypt, the care taken of them in the wilderness, and their settlement in Canaan, ver. 24—45. We are to look upon ourselves as concerned in the affairs of the old testament church, because to it were committed the oracles of God, which are our treasure, and out of it Christ arose, and these things happened to it for ensamples.

Ver. 1—7. Our devotion is here warmly excited; and we are stirred up, that we may stir up ourselves to praise God.

We must give thanks to him, as one who has always been our bountiful Benefactor. Call upon his name; as one whom we depend upon for further favours. Make known his deeds, that others may join in praising him. Sing psalms to God's honour, as those that rejoice in him. Glory in his holy name; for in glorying in him, we give glory to him. Seek his strength, that is, his grace, the strength of his Spirit to work in us that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be inquired of. Seek his face evermore; seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it while you live in this world. Let the hearts of those rejoice, that do seek him, for they have chosen well, and they may be sure their labour will not be in vain; for he will not only be found, but he will be found the rewarder of those that diligently seek him.

Ver. 8—24. We are here taught, in praising God, to look a great way back, and to give him the glory of what he did for his church in former ages, and the new testament furnishes us with subjects more interesting than even the history of Israel. Let us then remember the Redeemer's marvellous works, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. The

Lord hath indeed remembered his covenant with Abraham, in raising up his promised Seed, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed, and the Gentiles are become a chosen generation to show forth his praise, 1 Pet. 2. 9, 10.

Though true christians are yet but few in number, strangers and pilgrims upon earth, yet a far better inheritance than that of Canaan is insured to them by the covenant of God; and if we have the unction of the Holy Spirit, none can do us any harm; God will restrain even the mightiest. And, as in their case, afflictions are among our mercies, ver. 19. They prove our faith and love, they humble our pride, they wean us from the world, quicken our prayers, enlarge our experience of the Lord's faithfulness, and soften our hearts to compassion for others. When the Lord calls, famines obey his word; by them he breaks the staff of life, to punish guilty nations, and exercise the faith of his people.

The patriarchs had a right to the land of Canaan, not by providence, but by promise; not by purchase, but by descent; by the favour of God, and not any merit of their own. Heaven is the inheritance we have obtained, Eph. 1. 11. And this is the promise which God has promised us, even eternal life.

God's providences concerning the patriarchs, while they were waiting for the accomplishment of this promise, represent to us the care God takes of his people in this world, while they are yet on this side the heavenly Canaan; for these things happened unto them for examples, and encouragements to all the heirs of promise, that live by faith as they did.

Bread is the staff which supports life; when that staff is broken, the body fails and sinks to the earth. The word of God is the staff of spiritual life, the food and support of the soul; the sorest judgment is mentioned, by the prophet Amos 8. 11, as a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Such a famine was sore in all lands, when Christ appeared in the flesh; whose coming, with the blessed effect of it, is wonderfully shadowed forth in the history of Joseph.—(32.)

God will assuredly provide for those that trust in him, and has made arrangements for events of which they had no foresight. Thus, in his foreknowledge of our lost estate, long before we had existence, he appointed his beloved Son, of

whom Joseph was a type, to be our Redeemer. In the fulness of time he appeared on earth in the form of a servant, and by his sufferings paid the ransom of our souls. At the appointed time the bands of death were loosed, and he was exalted as Mediator; all the treasures of grace and salvation are entirely at his disposal; perishing sinners come to him, and are relieved from his inexhaustible stores. But with this example in view, we must expect hardship on earth before happiness in heaven. We must prepare for the cross, and for the hatred of the world. We must submit to the Lord's will, wait his time, and commit our all to his disposal; and in the depth of distress, the case of Joseph may teach us to expect important changes, even in this world.

19. "Until his prediction had come to pass, and the word of Jehovah had cleared him."—*Green.*

Ver. 25—45. After the history of the patriarchs, follows the history of Israel, when they grew into a nation.

As the believer commonly thrives best in his soul when under the cross, so the church often flourishes most in true holiness, and increases in number, while under persecution. But the favour of God, and following his precepts, excite the enmity of ungodly men against his servants. Yet instruments shall be raised up for the deliverance of the church, and plagues may be expected by persecutors; when God gives the word, every thing will unite to render them miserable and contemptible; while he will fulfil his largest promises to his people, and make them a terror to those who hate them.

Observe the mercies that accompanied this deliverance. In their bondage they had been impoverished, and yet they came out rich and wealthy. Their lives had been made bitter to them, and their bodies and spirits broken by their bondage; and yet, when God brought them forth, there was none sick, not one feeble person among their tribes. See the special care God took of them in the wilderness.

All the benefits bestowed on Israel as a nation, were only shadows of the spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in Christ Jesus. Having redeemed us with his blood, enriched us with his treasures, restored our souls to holiness, and set us at liberty from Satan's bondage, he guides and guards us all the way. He satisfies our souls with the bread of hea-

ven, and the water of life from the Rock of salvation, and will bring us safely to our incorruptible inheritance. But let us not forget that the Lord, by all he doeth for us, intends to teach, incline, and enable us to keep his laws; to show forth his praise here on earth, and for ever in heaven; and that he redeems his servants from all iniquity, and purifies them unto himself, to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

28. The Greek version is, "They provoked, or disobeyed his words." This difference has given rise to much criticism, but it seems merely to have arisen from the insertion or the omission of a negative particle, and it refers either to the Egyptians or to the Israelites, accordingly as the original reading has been. *Lightfoot* considers that it refers to some special act of obedience then performed by the Israelites, as their undergoing circumcision: see note, Exod. 10.

PSALM CVI.

The foregoing psalm was a history of God's goodness to Israel: this is a history of their rebellions and provocations. The psalmist (1.) Ascribes praise to the Lord, with a declaration of the happiness of his people, and a prayer to partake of it, ver. 1—5. (2.) A narrative of Israel's sins, beginning with an account of their deliverance at the Red Sea, ver. 6—12. (3.) Their provocations in the wilderness, ver. 13—33. (4.) Their uniting themselves with the nations of Canaan, yet they were saved from ruin, ver. 34—46. Concluding with prayer for more complete deliverance, united with praise, ver. 47, 48. The first verse and the two last are in 1 Chron. 16. 34—36.

Ver. 1—5. None of our sins or sufferings should prevent our ascribing glory and praise to the Lord, thanking him for his everlasting goodness and mercy. The more unworthy we are, the more is his kindness to be admired. This as much exceeds our ability as it does perfectly to fulfil his law; yet those who depend on the Redeemer's righteousness, will endeavour to copy his example, and by word and deed they will show forth his praise as they are able.

The psalmist well understood the difference between the nation of Israel and the Israelites indeed, that were among them. He shared their outward privileges, but his desire and prayer was that he might be remembered with the favour showed to the true people of God, and made a partaker with them of salvation

from sin, that he might see and share the blessings of the Lord's inheritance.

We must show forth his praise; we may show forth some of it, but who can show forth all? As there is a people in the world who are in a peculiar manner God's people, so there is a peculiar favour which God bears to that people, which all gracious souls desire an interest in; and we need desire no more to make us happy. God's people have reason to be a cheerful people; and those who have that gladness, that glory, need not envy the children of men their pleasure or pride. The gladness of God's nation, and the glory of his inheritance, are enough to satisfy any; for they have everlasting joy and glory at the end of them.

Ver. 6—12. Here begins a penitential confession of sin; for thus we must justify God in all he brings upon us, acknowledging that he has done right, because we have done wickedly: and the remembrance of former sins, notwithstanding which God did not cast off his people, is an encouragement to us to hope that though we are justly corrected, yet we shall not be utterly abandoned.

God's afflicted people here own themselves guilty before God. They bewail the sins of their fathers. Observe here the strangestupidity of Israel in the midst of the favours God bestowed upon them. They saw them, but they did not rightly apprehend the meaning and design of them. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have understood. We lose the benefit of providences for want of understanding them. Therefore God is distrusted, because his favours are not remembered. As far as man is left to himself, no miracles, mercies, warnings, or judgments will deeply or thoroughly influence his heart to trust in and serve the Lord. If he did not save us for his own name's sake, and to the praise of his glorious power and grace, we should all perish without remedy. We may often see that the time of our rebellions has aggravated their guilt. We have distrusted the Lord just after having experienced his merciful interpositions. But see in what a gracious and merciful way God sometimes silences the unbelief of his people, and turns their fears into praises; so it is written, They that erred in spirit, shall come to understanding, and they that murmured, shall learn doctrine, Isa. 29. 24.

Ver. 13—33. This is an abridgement of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations: and this is applied by the apostle to christians, 1 Cor. 10. 5, &c; for these things were written for our admonition, that we sin not like them, lest we should suffer like them.

The cause of their sin was, disregard to the works and word of God, ver. 13. They minded not what he had done for them. They made haste, they forgot his works, so it is in the margin. They made haste, their expectations anticipated God's promises; they expected to be in Canaan shortly, and because they were not, they questioned whether they should ever be there; whereas he that believeth, doth not make haste, Isa. 28. 16. And they forgot his works, which were undeniable evidences of his wisdom, power, and goodness. Those that will not wait for God's counsel, shall justly be given up to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels.

Many of their sins are here mentioned, together with the tokens of God's displeasure which they fell under. They did not only wish for flesh, but they lusted exceedingly after it. A desire, even of lawful things, when inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; therefore this is called lusting after evil things, 1 Cor. 10. 6.

We are told how God showed his displeasure against them for this, ver. 15. He filled them with uneasiness of mind, terror of conscience, and self-reproach. What is asked in passion, is often given in wrath. Many that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful, have, at the same time, leanness in their souls: no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite for the Bread of life, and then the soul must be lean. Those wretchedly forget themselves, that feast their bodies, and starve their souls. God gives the good things of this life in love, when with them he gives grace to glorify him in the use of them, Isa. 55. 2. The historical books are the best comment on this psalm.

Even the true believer will see abundant cause to say, It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed. Often have we been forgetful of the Divine law, the Saviour's sufferings, and our deliverance from our enemies; and have set up idols in our hearts; cleaved to some forbidden

object; so that if a greater than Moses had not stood in the breach, to turn away the anger of the Lord, we should have provoked him to destroy us. See here the mercy of God, and how his anger is turned away, even from a provoking people. See the power of prayer, and the interest which God's chosen have in heaven. See a type of Christ, God's Chosen, his Elect, in whom his soul delights; who stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath from a provoking world, and ever lives, for this end, making intercession. And though we have not utterly despised the heavenly inheritance, yet the weakness of our faith, and our eagerness after worldly things, have argued a perverse and ungrateful spirit. None but the Lord could have borne with us. We have brought corrections upon ourselves, and have reason to join humiliation with our gratitude; for though the Lord hath delivered us, and renewed our comforts, we have again provoked him. But still mercy has prevailed; the Lord has remembered his covenant, and has spared us for his name's sake.

The Israelites continued their murmurings to the very last of their wanderings. It went ill with Moses for their sakes. It is charged upon the people as their sin; They provoked his spirit with that with which they angered God himself. We must answer not only for our own passions, but for the provocation we give to the passions of others, especially of those, who, if not greatly provoked, would be meek and quiet.

God discovered his resentment of all intemperate heats, even in the dearest of his servants. If he dealt thus severely with Moses for unadvised words, what does their sin deserve, who had spoken so many presumptuous, wicked words? God deprived them of the blessing of Moses's guidance and government when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to himself. It is just with God to remove those relations that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them, and grieve their spirits.

28. Idols are called dead when considered in comparison with the living and true God. The heathen deities also were for the most part heroes or famous persons, who, after their death, were worshipped as gods.

Ver. 34—48. The narrative concludes with an account of Israel's conduct in

Canaan, and God's dealings with them, wherein both justice and mercy appeared.

Observe the steps of their apostasy. They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction. When they spared them, they promised themselves that they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them; but the way of sin is down hill; *omissions* make way for *commissions*; when they neglected to destroy the heathen, they learned their works. One sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them. They sacrificed their sons and daughters to devils, and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry. See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water; there is no villany which they that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly gives them up to a reprobate mind, Rom. 1. 28.

Their sin was, in part, their own punishment, and God brought his judgments upon them; what else could be expected? Their Defence being departed, their enemies fell upon them, and made an easy prey of them. Sinners often see themselves ruined by those by whom they have suffered themselves to be led into evil. Satan, who is a tempter, will be a tormentor.

At length God showed pity to his people for his covenant's cause. The unchangeableness of God's merciful nature and love to his people, makes him change the course of justice into mercy, and no other change is meant by God's repentance. Although God hath entered into judgment with a sinner, even yet he shows mercy again, as the history of Israel teaches. He hath the ruling of all men's affections; and what pity his people find from any hand, is the effect and evidence of God's pity towards them.—(18.)

Our case is awful when the outward church is considered. Many nominal christians have forgotten their Saviour, and turned aside to the worship of saints and images. Vast multitudes discard the God and Saviour of the bible, substituting a deity, the creature of their imagination. Even among those who do not adopt such sentiments, we find conformity to the world, the indulgence of carnal lusts, and sacrificing of others to their

avarice. Numbers train up their children in vanity and vice, as if they meant to devote them to Satan. When nations, professing christianity, are guilty of such enormities, no wonder if the Lord brings them low for their iniquities. Unless there is general and deep repentance among them, there can be no prospect but of increasing calamities.

The psalm concludes with prayer and praise: prayer for the completing of his people's deliverance; praise for the beginning and progress of it. We should earnestly pray to God to distinguish his professed people from the heathen by his sanctifying grace, and to unite them in love, that they may give thanks unto his holy name, and triumph in his praise. Let us beseech him to bring again the dispersed Jews into his church; let us bless his name for our peculiar mercies, and desire his universal and everlasting praises, and that all the people of the earth may say, Amen. X

PSALM CVII.

The psalmist, having in the two foregoing psalms celebrated the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, in his dealings with his church in particular, here observes some instances of his providential care of the children of men in general, especially in their distresses. He specifies some of the most common calamities of human life, and shows how God succours those that labour under them, in answer to their prayers. (1.) Banishment and dispersion, ver. 2—9. (2.) Captivity and imprisonment, ver. 10—16. (3.) Sickness and distemper of body, ver. 17—22. (4.) Danger and distress at sea, ver. 23—32. These are put for all similar perils, in which those that cry unto God have ever found him a very present Help. He then (5.) Specifies the varieties and vicissitudes of events concerning nations and families; in all which, God's hand is to be seen by his own people, with joyful acknowledgments of his goodness, ver. 33—43.

Ver. 1—9. Wherever we turn our thoughts, we perceive the effects of the Lord's goodness and mercy, which should excite our grateful praises; but the redeemed of the Lord alone will thank him unfeignedly, even for common benefits. They have most reason to say that God is good, and his mercy everlasting; these

are the children of God that were scattered abroad, whom Christ died to gather together in one, out of all lands, John 11. 52; Matt. 24. 31.

There seems in these verses some reference to the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, and perhaps from Babylon; but they are not exclusively applicable thereto. The circumstances of travellers in those countries are also noted.

In this our temperate climate, surrounded as we are with perpetual verdure, and with every object that can delight the eye, we can scarcely conceive the horrors encountered by the hapless traveller when crossing the trackless sands, and exposed to all the arduours of a vertical sun, ver. 5.—(33.)

The words also exactly describe their case whom the Lord hath redeemed from the bondage of Satan, and collected from all parts of the earth; who pass through the world as a dangerous and dreary wilderness; who are often ready to faint through troubles, fears, and temptations; who learn to call upon the Lord in every danger and difficulty, and are guided, guarded, fed, and refreshed, till at length they arrive at the city the Lord has prepared for their habitation, where their souls will be for ever satisfied with his goodness.

God's way, though to us it seems about, will appear, at last, to have been the right way. We are here as in a wilderness, and have here no continuing city, but dwell as strangers and pilgrims; but we are under the guidance of his wise and good providence, and committing ourselves to him, we shall be led in the right way to the city that has foundations.

The same God that has led us, has fed us with food convenient; has provided food for the soul, and filled the hungry soul with goodness. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness, after God, the living God, and communion with him, shall be filled with the goodness of his house, both in grace and glory.

Now for all this, those who receive mercy are called upon to return thanks, ver. 8. God's works of mercy are works of wonderful power, considering the weakness, and of wonderful grace, considering the unworthiness of those he shows mercy to. We must acknowledge God's goodness to others as well as to ourselves.

8. Literally, "Let them acknowledge to Jehovah his mercy, and his wonders for the children of Adam."—*Bp. Horne.*

Ver. 10-16. Take notice of the goodness of God toward prisoners and captives. Observe a description of this affliction, ver. 10. It intimates that they are desolate and disconsolate. They sit in the shadow of death, being appointed to die; bowed down with pain and anguish of spirit.

In the eastern prisons there was a dungeon in the worst and lowest part of the prison. Also stocks for detaining the persons of the prisoners more securely, wherein the prisoner was confined in tortures truly insupportable. The keepers of the prisons had a discretionary power to treat their prisoners as they pleased, being only required to produce the prisoner when called for.—(33.)

We have the cause of this affliction, ver. 11. Wilful sin is rebellion against the words of God: it is a contradiction to his truths, and a violation of his laws. The design of this affliction, ver. 12, is to humble them for sin, to cast down every high, proud, aspiring thought. Afflicting providences must be improved as humbling providences; and we lose the benefit of them, if our hearts be unhumiliated and unbroken, as high and hard as ever under them. The duty of this afflicted state is to pray, ver. 13. Sense will make men cry when they are in trouble; but grace will direct them to cry unto the Lord, from whom the affliction comes, and who alone can remove it. Their deliverance out of the affliction, ver. 13. He brought them out of darkness into light, welcome light, then doubly sweet and pleasant; their liberty was to them life from the dead, ver. 14.

It is a shadow of the sinner's deliverance from a far worse confinement. By rebellion against God we have all brought ourselves under the condemnation of his holy law; and Satan, by our lusts, holds us fast in the most miserable bondage. This the awakened sinner discovers; he becomes sensible of his guilt and misery. Having struggled in vain for deliverance, he finds there is no help for him but in the mercy and grace of God. For this he seeks by earnest prayer, and thus receives liberty and peace. The change of circumstances in a poor prisoner, when a free pardon is sent him, shadows forth the case of him, whose iniquity is forgiven by a merciful God, whose pardon is accompanied by deliverance from the power of sin and Satan, and by the sanctifying

and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit. And at the resurrection, when the gates of the grave shall be thrown open, and sin and death finally be done with, his deliverance and his gratitude will be perfected together.

Ver. 17-22. Bodily sickness is another calamity of this life, which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us; and of that the psalmist speaks in these verses.

It is the sin of the soul that is the cause of sickness, ver. 17-19; we bring it upon ourselves. If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness; but the transgression of our lives, and the iniquity of our hearts, make it necessary. Sinners are fools. They prejudice their bodily health by their intemperance, and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. This their way is their folly. The righteous providence of God has connected several dreadful diseases with forbidden gratifications.

The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness, ver. 18. They are, in their own apprehension, and in the apprehension of all about them, at the brink of the grave. Is any sick? Let him pray; let him be prayed for: prayer is a salve for every sore. It is by the power and mercy of God that we are recovered from sickness, and it is our duty to be thankful.

They cry unto him, and he saves them out of their distresses, ver. 19; he removes their griefs, and prevents their fears. He does it easily; He sent his word, and healed them, ver. 20. This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought when he was upon earth. All his miracles of this kind were emblems of his healing diseases of the soul. It may also be applied to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works in regeneration. He sends his word, and heals souls; convinces, converts, sanctifies them, and all by the word. In the common instances of recovery from sickness, God in his providence does but speak, and it is done. He does it effectually. The convinced sinner knows that the diseases of the soul must end in misery, unless they are cured; he finds that he can increase, but cannot remedy them. But he cries unto the Lord, and by his word and Spirit the soul is restored to health and holiness. Nothing is too hard for God to do. Let those particularly, to whom God has thus granted a

new life, spend it in his service; not only bring a thank-offering to the altar, but a thankful heart to God.

Ver. 23—32. The psalmist calls upon them to give glory to God, who are delivered from dangers at sea. Let those that go to sea, by all the wonders they observe there, be led to consider and adore the infinite perfections of God. Much of the power of God appears at all times in the sea.

Mariners transact their business upon the tempestuous ocean, and there witness deliverances of which others cannot form an idea. When, at His command whom winds and seas obey, a storm arises, their situation is most perilous, the most courageous often are dismayed, they are tossed about, and stagger as though drunken, and seem baffled in all their efforts. But the Lord is often pleased to rescue them as from the jaws of destruction; and their distress is succeeded by gladness when they arrive at their harbour.

How seasonable it is at such a time to pray. They that go to sea, must expect perils as here described, and the best preparation they can make to encounter them, is to make sure of access to God by prayer, ver. 28. Even heathen mariners, in a storm, cried every man to his god, Jonah 1. 5; but they that have the Lord for their God, have a present and powerful Help in that and every other time of need.

This may remind us of the terrors and distress of conscience many experience, and of those deep scenes of trouble many pass through, in their christian course. Like mariners, they are exposed to tempests unknown to others, and are sometimes at their wits' end; yet in answer to their cries, the Lord turns their storm into a calm, and causes their trials to end in gladness and praise.

Ver. 33—43. The psalmist here gives God the glory of the surprising changes sometimes made in the affairs of men. Fruitful countries are made barren, and barren countries are made fruitful. Much of the comfort of this life depends upon the soil in which our lot is cast. Now the sin of man has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil, and made it unserviceable, ver. 33, 34. Justly is the ground made unfruitful to those who bring not forth fruit unto God. Let the desolations of Judea, and many countries in Asia and

Europe, that formerly were famous, expound this.

Necessitous families are raised and enriched, while prosperous families are impoverished, and go to decay. If we look abroad in the world, we see many greatly increasing, whose beginning was small. We see many that have thus suddenly risen, as suddenly sunk and brought to nothing. Worldly wealth is an uncertain thing; and often those that are filled with it, grow so secure, that, ere they are aware, they lose it again. God has many ways of making men poor; he can do it by oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

Those that are high and great in the world, are abased; and those that were mean and despicable, are advanced to honour. Let not princes be envied, nor the poor despised, for God has many ways of changing the condition of both. The casting the Jews out of the church, and the preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, answer to this picture. This will be still more the case in future times, when the righteous will see it and rejoice, and iniquity be silenced.

Let all the Lord's ministers and people cultivate their own souls, and those of their own families and congregations, that, being blessed abundantly, the church may yield fruits of increase. Let us pray for the revival of religion, the spread of the pure gospel.

The psalmist improves these remarks,
1. For the solacing of saints; The righteous shall see it, and rejoice. It is a great comfort to a good man to see how God manages the children of men, as the potter does the clay, so as to serve his own purposes by them; to see it manifest beyond dispute, that verily there is a God who judges in the earth.

2. For the silencing of sinners; All iniquity shall stop her mouth; it shall be a full conviction of those that deny the Divine Providence. When sinners see how justly God takes away the gifts they have abused, they shall not have a word to say for themselves.

3. For the satisfying of all concerning the Divine goodness. It is of great use to us to be fully assured of God's goodness; to be experimentally acquainted and duly affected with it; that his loving kindness may be before our eyes, 26. 3. We must lay up these things, mind them, and keep them in mind, Luke 2. 19. A right observation of the providences of

God will contribute very much to the progress of a good christian.

A truly wise person will treasure up in his heart the contents of this delightful and instructive psalm. By so doing he will fully understand the weakness and wretchedness of man, and the power and loving-kindness of God, who, not for our merit, but for his mercy's sake, dispelleth our ignorance, breaketh off our sins, healeth our infirmities, preserveth us in temptations, placeth us in his church, enricheth us with his grace, sheltereth us from persecution, blesseth us in time, and will crown us in eternity. Eternal mercy is the theme here proposed, and those who have tasted its sweets, are invited to join in setting forth its praises.—(32.)

34. The ancient and present state of Judea strongly exemplify this declaration: formerly, one of the most fruitful lauds upon the face of the earth; now, among the most barren and desolate. The particulars of its productions, mentioned in the scriptures, with the testimony of ancient heathen and Jewish writers, show the first. The accounts of modern travellers prove that there can be no reason for doubting that such was its state; they also prove that the circumstances of its present barrenness and comparative unproductiveness are owing to the Divine displeasure. Several have stated particulars which show, that if this were removed, and the land placed under a wise government, with the Divine blessing it would again at once become the lovely and fertile spot described in scripture. See *Macknight, T. H. Horne, Keith*, and others.

PSALM CVIII.

This psalm begins with praise, and concludes with prayer, and faith is shown in both. (1.) The psalmist here gives thanks to God for mercies to himself, ver. 1—5. (2.) He prays to God for mercies for the land, pleading the promises of God, ver. 6—13. The former part is from Ps. 57. 7—11; the latter from Ps. 60. 5—12; and both with very little variation. See remarks on those psalms.

We may usefully to ourselves select passages from different psalms, to assist our devotions, encourage our expectations, and enliven our gratitude. When the heart is established in faith and love, the tongue, being employed in grateful praises, is indeed our glory. Every endowment becomes honourable and profitable to the possessor, as it is employed in God's service, and to his glory. Believers may pray with assured faith and hope, for all the blessings of salvation; which are secured to them by the faithful promise

and covenant of God, and will be effected by his powerful arm, and communicated from his everlasting love and mercy. Let them then expect from him help in every trouble, and victory in every conflict. Whatever we do, whatever we gain, God must have all the glory. Lord, visit all our souls with this salvation; with this favour which thou bearest to thy chosen people.

PSALM CIX.

This psalm exhibits David, as the type of Christ, (1.) Complaining of the treachery, malice, injustice, and ingratitude of his enemies, ver. 1—5. (2.) Denouncing various curses on them, and on one in particular, not as the expressions of anger, but of the spirit of prophecy, ver. 6—20. (3.) Intermingling his prayers with bitter lamentations, and with believing praises, ver. 21—31.

Ver. 1—5. It is the unspeakable comfort of all good people, that, whoever is against them, God is for them, and to him they may apply themselves as to one pleased to concern himself for them.

When David's enemies falsely accused him, and misrepresented him, he applied himself to God, and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them; if others are injurious to us, yet we must not fail to do our duty to them. They laughed at him for his devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it. In these particulars David was a type of Christ.

The Redeemer took upon him our nature, willingly became poor, and submitted to pain and suffering to atone for our sins, and to purchase our salvation, praying for his enemies. When we consider at what a price the gifts he bestows were purchased, we should place the higher value on them, and express the more gratitude for them.

Ver. 6—20. The psalmist here fixes upon some one person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and in a devout manner, not from malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God, and against sin, and with a reference to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him, John 19. 11, he predicts his destruction, foresees and

pronounces him completely miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, A son of perdition. The Lord Jesus may be supposed to speak here as a Judge, denouncing sentence on some of his enemies, as a warning to others.

The imprecations here are very terrible. Set the wicked one over him, so some; that is, Satan, as it follows. It was fulfilled in Judas, into whom Satan entered, to hurry him into sin first, and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, set his own conscience against him. Let Satan stand on his right hand to deceive him, and then to accuse him. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day. When men reject the salvation of Christ, their very prayers are numbered among their sins. In rejecting Christ they refuse the blessing, and it will be far from them; the curse of the broken law must be their choice and their portion. All their blasphemies against the truths and professors of the gospel rebound upon themselves.

See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin; makes them and theirs despicable and hateful, and entails poverty, shame, and misery upon their posterity; it is sin, that is mischievous destructive thing. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ: their princes and people were cut off; their country laid waste, their posterity made fugitives and vagabonds. The ground of these imprecations bespeaks them very just, though they sound very severe. The whole may be applied to all the enemies of Christ and his church.

They that reject Christ, reject the fountain of blessing, and choose a curse for their portion, and this will certainly be given them in full measure. The curse which lighted on the whole Jewish nation is compared to a garment which covers the whole man, and is girded close about his loins; to water which is dispersed through all the human frame; and to oil which insinuates itself into the very bones, upon which it produces the most painful effects. If such in this world be the reward of Messiah's adversaries, what will hereafter be inflicted on those who crucify him afresh? Heb. 6. 6. And what will be the effect of the sentence, Go ye cursed, upon the bodies and souls of the

wicked? How will it affect all the senses of the former, and the faculties of the latter, with pain, anguish, horror, and despair. Think on these things, sinners, tremble and repent.—(32.)

6. &c. These are not to be considered as prayers, but as predictions. The imperative mood being put for the future tense, agreeably to the known idiom of the Hebrew language; it is shown to be so put by the future being used in other parts of the prediction.—*T. H. Horne.*
See note, Ps. 5. 10.

Ver. 21—31. The psalmist here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner.

I am poor and needy, therefore one that needs and craves thy help. He was troubled in mind. He apprehended himself drawing near to his end. Man's life, at best, is like a shadow, like the evening shadow. He was unsettled; his mind fluctuating, and his outward condition far from being fixed. His body was wasted, and almost worn away. But it is better to have leanness in the body, while the soul prospers, and is in health, than to have leanness in the soul, while the body is feasted.

He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies. In all these things, David was a type of Christ, who in his humiliation was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached: he was also a type of the church, which is often afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. He prays for mercy for himself. He does not prescribe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to His wisdom; Lord, do for me what seems good in thine eyes. Do that which thou knowest will be best for me, though, for the present, it may seem to make against me. He despises the causeless curses of his enemies. He values the blessing of God as sufficient to balance their curses. If God bless us, we need not care who curses us; for how can they curse whom God has not cursed, nay, whom he has blessed? Numb. 23. 8. He prays that his enemies might be ashamed; sinners bring shame upon themselves, but true penitents take shame to themselves. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy; let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure of my salvation. He concludes with the joy of faith; in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs. God was David's protector in his sufferings, and was present also with

the Lord Jesus in his. Let all those that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him.

We need not fear but that the Lord, having raised up and exalted our heavenly Advocate, will rebuke Satan, and plead the cause of those that praise him. But let sinners take warning, and flee for refuge to the great Redeemer. Let those who have employed their tongues in cursing and profaneness, fear and tremble, lest their imprecations come upon them. Let opposers of the gospel be persuaded to cease from their attempts; and let all the Lord's poor and afflicted people rejoice in him, and praise his holy name.

Great is the joy of the redeemed upon earth; greater will it be, after the resurrection of the dead, in the courts of heaven. Jesus, unjustly put to death, and now risen again, is a perpetual Advocate and Intercessor for his people, ever ready to appear on their behalf against a corrupt world, and the great accuser.—(32.)

23. The vast swarms of locusts fly in the direction they are carried forward by the wind, and are "tossed up and down by it," if it blows briskly: see Exod. 10. 19.

PSALM CX.

This psalm is wholly concerning Christ, the Messiah, promised to the fathers, and expected by them; the Jews of old so understood it. Of him, no doubt, the prophet here speaks, and of no other. Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King, with reference both to his humiliation and his exaltation; and of each of these we have here an account. His prophetic office, ver. 2. His priestly office, ver. 4. His kingly office, ver. 1, 3, 5, 6. His states of humiliation and exaltation, ver. 7. Let us submit ourselves entirely to him, to his grace and government, and triumph in him as our Prophet, Priest, and King, by whom we hope to be ruled, and taught, and saved for ever; and as the Prophet, Priest, and King of the whole church, who shall reign till he has put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, and delivered up the kingdom to God the Father.

The prophetic character of this psalm is proved by the numerous references in the New Testament, Matt. 22. 42—45; Acts 2. 34, 35; 1 Cor. 15. 25; Heb. 1. 13; 5. 6; 10. 13. The psalm is exclusively prophetic, for David could not be his own Lord, nor was he a priest after the order

of Melchizedek. To Christ alone can this sublime composition be referred; it is certain that in the days of our Lord such an interpretation was not questioned. They might question whether Jesus of Nazareth was the person referred to, but our Lord's reasoning in connecting it with the true Messiah, they did not attempt to gainsay, Matt. 22. 42.

Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is. Our ascended Saviour is King of kings, and Lord of lords. David speaking by the Holy Ghost, and declaring the Divine decree concerning the exaltation and triumphs of the promised Messiah, called him his Lord, although he was to descend from him according to the flesh. Not only he should be superior to all the kings of the earth, but he then existed in glory as the eternal Son of God.

Sit thou at my right hand, ver. 1. *Sitting* is a resting posture: after services and sufferings, Christ entered into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture; he sits to give law, to give judgment. It is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever: sitting at the right hand of God denotes his dignity and his dominion. All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, pass through his hand.

All his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool: this the apostle observes. We see not yet all thing put under him, Heb. 2. 8. Christ himself waits for the completion of his victories and triumphs.

He should have a kingdom set up in the world, beginning at Jerusalem, ver. 2. The kingdom of Christ was sent out of Zion, for there the Spirit was given, and the preaching of the gospel among all nations must begin at Jerusalem: see Luke 24. 47, 49. Out of Zion must go forth the law of faith, Isa. 2. 3. The gospel of Christ, being sent of God, is mighty through God to do wonders, 2 Cor. 10. 4. It is the rod of Christ's strength. Some make it to allude not only to the sceptre of a prince, denoting the glory of Christ shining in the gospel, but to a shepherd's crook, his rod and staff, denoting the tender care Christ takes of his church; for he is both the great and good Shepherd.

His kingdom, being set up, shall be maintained and kept up in the world, in despite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness. He shall have a great number of subjects, who shall be to him for a name and a praise, ver. 3.

They are redeemed by him; he has purchased them to be to himself a peculiar people, Tit. 2. 14. They shall be a willing people, a people of willingness; alluding to servants that choose their service, and are not brought like captives to it; they love their masters. Christ's people are a willing people. The conversion of a soul consists in its being willing to be Christ's, coming under his yoke, and into his interests, with an entire compliance. They shall be so in the day of his power. There is the power of the Spirit, going along with the power of the word, to the people of Christ, which is effectual to make them willing. The former leaves sinners without matter of excuse, this leaves saints without matter of boasting. Whoever are willing to be Christ's people, it is the free and mighty grace of God that makes them so. They shall be allured to him by the beauty of holiness; by the sight given them of his beauty, who is the holy Jesus, and by the beauty of the church, which is the holy nation. They shall be admitted by him into the beauty of holiness, as spiritual priests, to minister in his sanctuary. They shall attend on him in the beautiful attire or ornaments of grace and sanctification. Holiness becomes his house for ever.

He shall have very many people devoted to him. In the early days of the gospel, in the morning of the new testament, great numbers flocked to Christ, as a dew from the Lord, Mic. 5. 7; Isa. 44. 4. Or from their childhood; thou hast the dew of thy people's youth, their hearts and affections when they are young. The dew of our youth, even in the morning of our days, ought to be consecrated to our Lord Jesus.

He shall not only be a King, but a Priest, ver. 4. Our Lord Jesus Christ was appointed to that office, and faithfully executes it; he is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin, Heb. 5. 1, to make atonement for our sins. He is God's Minister to us, and our Advocate with God, and so is a Mediator between us and God. He is a Priest for ever; not only are we never to expect any other dispen-

sation of grace than this by the priesthood of Christ, but the blessed fruits and consequences of it will remain to eternity. He is made a Priest with an oath, which proves the pre-eminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, Heb. 7. 20, 21. The priesthood of Christ is confirmed by the highest ratifications possible, that it might be an unshaken foundation for our faith and hope to build upon. He is a Priest of the order of Melchizedek, which, as it was prior, so it was, upon many accounts, superior to that of Aaron, and a more lively representation of Christ's priesthood. Melchizedek was a priest upon his throne, so is Christ, Zech. 6. 13, King of righteousness, and King of peace. Melchizedek had no successor, nor has Christ; his is an unchangeable priesthood. The apostle comments largely upon these words, Heb. 7. and builds on them his discourse of Christ's priestly office; which he shows was founded on this most sure word of prophecy. For, as the New Testament explains the Old, the Old Testament confirms the New; Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of both.

We have our great Redeemer conquering his enemies, ver. 5, 6. Our Lord Jesus will certainly be too hard for those, whoever they may be, that fight against him, either by persecutions or by perverse disputings. Observe here the conqueror; the Lord Jesus, to whom all judgment is committed. Christ's sitting at the right hand of God speaks as much terror to his enemies, as happiness to his people. The time fixed for this victory is the day of his wrath; that is, when the measure of their iniquities is full, and they are ripe for ruin. When the day of his patience is expired, then the day of his wrath comes. Christ has wrath as well as grace. See also the extent of this victory. The greatest that set themselves against Christ, shall be made to fall before him. It shall reach very far. He will plead with all nations, Joel 3. 2.

He shall judge among them. It is not a military execution done in fury; before he condemns and slays, he will judge; he will make it appear that they have brought this ruin upon themselves, Reg. 19. 1, 2. The effect of this victory shall be the complete and utter ruin of all his enemies. He shall wound the heads, which seems to refer to the first promise of the Messiah, Gen. 3. 15, that he should bruise the serpent's head. He shall wound

the head of his enemies, Ps. 68. 21; some read it, He shall wound him that is the head over many countries; either Satan, or Antichrist, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth. The slain of the Lord shall be many: see Isa. 34. 3, &c.; Ezek. 39. 12, 14; Rev. 14. 20; 19. 17, 18.

We have here the Redeemer saving his friends, and comforting them for their benefit. He shall be humbled; He shall drink of the brook in the way, of that bitter cup the Father put into his hand. The wrath of God, running in the curse of the law, may be considered as the brook in the way of his undertaking. Christ drank of this brook, when he was made a curse for us. He drank of the waters of affliction, in his way to the throne of glory. He shall be exalted; When he died, he bowed the head, John 19. 30; but he soon lifted up the head by his own power in his resurrection. He lifted up the head as a conqueror, yea more than a conqueror. This denotes not only his elevation, but his triumph in it, Col. 2. 15. David spake as a type of him, Ps. 27. 6, Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies.

What then are we? Has the gospel of Christ been to us the power of God unto salvation? Has his kingdom been set up in our hearts? Are we become his loyal subjects?—Once we knew not our need of his salvation, and were not willing that he should reign over us; have we experienced a day of his power? Are we willing to renounce every sin, to turn from a wicked ensnaring world, to rely only on his merits and mercy—to have him for our Prophet, Priest, and King? And do we desire to be adorned with the beauties of holiness? To those who have experienced this change, the Saviour's sacrifice, intercession, and blessing belong. When they have drunk of the bitter waters of death, they too shall lift up their heads, be delivered from Satan, sin, and every foe, and be for ever happy in his presence. But his power will be very dreadful to all who oppose or pervert his gospel. Let us then bow to the sceptre of his grace, and yield ourselves to be his subjects, that we may love his appearing, as the accomplishment of all our desires and expectations.

PSALM CXI.

This psalm, and several that follow it, seem to have been penned for the service

of the Jewish church in the solemn feasts. This is a psalm of praise, the title is Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord. It contains the psalmist's resolution to praise the Lord, for the greatness, glory, justice, goodness, mercy, truth, and wisdom of his works, and of his name, ver. 1—9. And his recommendation of the fear of God as the beginning of true wisdom, ver. 10.

The psalmist resolves to praise God himself, ver. 1. Our exhortations should always be seconded by our example, if we desire they should have effect. We must praise God both in private and in public, in lesser and greater assemblies, in our own families and in the Lord's house. He recommends the works of the Lord, as the proper subject of our meditations when we are praising him—the dispensations of his providence toward the world, the church, and particular persons.

God's works are very magnificent; they are the products of infinite wisdom and power. All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one, ver. 3; it is his work; such is the beauty and harmony of providence, and so admirably do all its dispensations centre in one design. All that truly love God, have pleasure in his works, nor do their thoughts dwell upon any subject with more delight than on the works of God. In studying both sciences and history, we should seek to discover the greatness and glory of God's works. These works of God, that are humbly and diligently sought into, shall be found of all that have pleasure in them.

They are all just and holy; His righteousness endures for ever. Of much that we do, the greatest kindness is to forget it; but notice is to be taken of God's works. They are kind; in them the Lord shows that he is gracious and full of compassion. God's pardoning sin is the most wonderful of all his works, and which ought to be remembered to his glory. It is a further instance of his grace and compassion, that he has given meat to them that fear him, ver. 5. He gives them food convenient for them; so he does to others by common providence; but to those who fear him he gives it by covenant, and in pursuance of the promise; for it follows, He will be ever mindful of his covenant; so that they can see covenant-love even in common mercies. They are earnest of what God will do, according to his promise. He

will ever be mindful of his covenant, for he has ever been so, and he ever will be.

We are here taught to give glory to God for the great things he has done for his people, for his people of Israel, of old and of late; He has showed his people the power of his works, ver. 6, especially in the many deliverances which he wrought for them.

His works of providence were done according to the truth of the Divine promises and prophecies—and so were verity or truth; and by Him who has a right to dispose of the earth and the fulness of it as he pleases—and so are judgment or righteous; and this holds good of his work of grace upon the heart, ver. 7, 8. All his commandments are sure, all have been fulfilled by Christ, and remain with him a rule of walk and conversation. —(27.)

He sent redemption unto his people, ver. 9; not only out of Egypt at first, but often afterwards: and these redemptions were typical of the great redemption, which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus.

Here his everlasting righteousness shines forth in union with his boundless mercy. Having sent his people a nobler redemption than that of Israel out of Egypt, and given them the bread of life, he has confirmed his covenant for ever. His name is holy, and as sinners have cause to tremble before him, so saints should stand in awe of his infinite majesty. The fear of him is the beginning of wisdom, ver. 10. No man is wise who does not fear the Lord; no man acts wisely excepting as influenced by that fear. This fear will lead to repentance, to faith in Christ, to watchfulness and obedience. Such persons are of a good understanding, however poor, unlearned, or despised. And as God will be praised and glorified in and by them for ever, so will they be honoured of him, and commended for wisdom.

PSALM CXII.

This psalm shows how much it is our wisdom to fear God, and do his commandments. We have here the character of the righteous, ver. 1. Also the blessedness of the righteous. There is a blessing entailed upon their posterity, ver. 2. There is a blessing conferred upon themselves. Prosperity outward and inward, ver. 3.

Comfort, ver. 4. Wisdom, ver. 5. Stability, ver. 6—8. Honour, ver. 6, 9. The misery of the wicked is shown, ver. 10. So that good and evil are set before us, the blessing and the curse.

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We have reason to praise the Lord, that there are a people in the world, who fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people; both of which are owing entirely to the grace of God.

The blessed Redeemer so delighted in the commandments of his heavenly Father, that it was his meat to obey them perfectly, in the midst of temptation and sufferings, John 4. 34. He is the Father of the whole family of the upright, who shall be blessed through him; his riches are unsearchable, his liberality unspeakable, his righteousness and glory are everlasting. His true disciples, being justified by faith in him, and made partakers of his Spirit, are conformed in their measure to his image, and copy his example. They fear the Lord, as well as love and praise him. They give him the glory of his salvation, and delight greatly in the law of God, Rom. 7. 22, though not able perfectly to obey it.

Blessings are laid up for the faithful and their posterity, and true riches are bestowed upon them, with as much of this world's possessions as is profitable for them. In the darkest hours of affliction and trial, the light of hope and peace will spring up within them, and seasonable relief shall turn their mourning into joy. From their Lord's example they learn to be kind and full of compassion, as well as just in all their dealings; they show favour as they are able; and are frugal, and use discretion, that they may be liberal in that manner which appears most likely to do good. Those who thus show their faith by their works have a righteousness which endureth for ever, and they shall never be separated from the love of God their Saviour, 2 Cor. 9. 6—11. Alms will not justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but are good deeds, which we are bound to perform; so that if we are not charitable, we are not just; we withhold good from those to whom it is due. Envy and slander may for a time hide their true characters here, but they shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

They need not be afraid of evil tidings. A good man shall have a settled spirit.

Surely he shall not be moved, whatever happens; not moved either from his duty, or from his comfort. This is a part both of the character, and of the comfort of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their minds stayed upon God, and so to keep them calm, and easy, and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so, and grace to do so. Even at the approach of death, and in the day of judgment, they shall have confidence. Observe, It is the duty and interest of the people of God, not to be afraid of evil tidings; not to be put into confusion by them, nor into an expectation of worse and worse; but, whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say, with blessed Paul, None of these things move me; and Neither will I fear, though the earth be removed, 46. 2. The fixedness of the heart is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. Trusting in the Lord is the best and surest way of establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise, in the word of God, and so repose in him as our rest. The heart of man cannot fix any where, to its satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing. Those whose hearts are established by faith, will patiently wait till they have gained their point. It will complete the satisfaction of the saints, when they shall look back upon their troubles and pressures, and be able to say with St. Paul, when he had recounted the persecutions he endured, But out of them all the Lord delivered me, 2 Tim. 3. 11.

Compare all this with the vexation of sinners, ver. 10. Two things shall fret them. 1. The happiness of the righteous. This is often fulfilled in this world. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked. But it will most fully be accomplished in the other world. 2. Their own disappointment; The desire of the wicked shall perish; their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and therefore, when these perish, their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off to their everlasting confusion; their hope is but as a spider's web. O Lord, form us by thy grace to the character of thy redeemed people, that we may possess their happiness.

The blessings of the gospel are spiritual and eternal, and they are conferred upon the members of the christian church, through Christ their Head, who is the

pattern of all righteousness, and the Giver of all grace.—(32.)

PSALM CXIII.

We are here called upon, and urged to praise God, ver. 1—3. We are furnished with matter for praise, and words are put into our mouths, to give to God the glory of the elevations of his glory and greatness, ver. 4, 5. We are here told of the condescensions of his grace and goodness, ver. 6—9, which very much illustrate one another.

In this psalm we are exhorted to give glory to God; to give him the glory due to his name. The invitation is very pressing; it is work to which we are very backward, and need be excited to perform.

God has praise from his own people. They have most reason to praise him; for those who attend him as his servants, know him best, and receive most of his favours, and it is the work required of them as his servants: it is easy pleasant work to speak well of their Master.

God's name ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from east to west, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power, and goodness, ver. 3. It is to be lamented that so great a part of mankind are ignorant of him, and give that praise to others, which is due to him alone. But there is more in it; this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the gospel-dispensation, when the church shall no longer be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall spread itself all the world over, when in every place spiritual incense shall be offered to our God, Mal. 1. 11; then, from the rising to the setting of the sun, the Lord's name shall be praised, by some in all countries.

Within this wide space the Lord's name is to be praised; it ought to be, though it is not. Ere long it will be when all nations shall come and worship before him, Rev. 15. 3, 4.—(37.)

We are here directed what to give God the glory of. He is exalted above all blessing and praise, not only all ours, but all the angels. We must therefore say, with holy admiration, Who is like unto the Lord our God! God is to be praised, as transcendently, incomparably, and infinitely great; for he dwells on high; and from on high sees all, and rules all, and justly attracts all praise to himself.

God is great, yet he despises not any, Job 36, 5. He humbles himself to behold all his creatures, all his subjects, though he is infinitely above them. It is condescension in God to behold the things in heaven, to direct the motions, and accept the praises and services of the angels themselves; for he needs them not, nor is he benefited by them. Much more is it condescension in him to behold the things that are in the earth; to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and overrule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example. If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth, and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost! Here indeed he humbles himself in regarding the worship of mean polluted sinners on earth. How inconceivable is his love in taking upon him the nature of man, to ransom guilty souls!

God sometimes magnifies himself, and his own wisdom, power, and sovereignty, when having some great work to do, he chooses to employ those in it, that were least likely, and least thought of for it by themselves or others. The apostles were sent from fishing to be fishers of men. The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him, 1 Cor. 1. 27, 28; 2 Cor. 4. 7.

And this is God's constant method in his kingdom of grace. He takes men, though beggars, and even traitors, to be his favourites, his children, kings and priests unto him; and numbers them with the princes of his chosen people. He giveth us all our comforts, which are generally the more welcome when long delayed, and no longer expected.

In sacred history we have several instances of the barren made to keep house, and to be joyful mothers of children. These examples may be considered as shadowing forth that marvellous exertion of Divine power, whereby the Gentile church after many ages of barrenness was made fruitful, Isa. 54. 1; Gal. 4. 27.—(32.)

Let us pray that those lands which are yet barren, may speedily become fruitful, and produce numerous converts who may join with us in praising the Lord.

This and the five following psalms, constitute the great Hallel, or song of praise, sung at the Jewish festivals, particularly at the passover and the feast of tabernacles. It is by some thought to have been the hymn sung by Christ and his apostles after the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Matt. 26. 30.

PSALM CXIV.

In this psalm, the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt is celebrated in lively strains of praise; it was fitly therefore made a part of the great Hallelujah, or song of praise, which the Jews were wont to sing at the close of the passover-supper. It must never be forgotten that they were brought out of slavery, ver. 1. That God set up his tabernacle among them, ver. 2. That the sea and Jordan were divided before them, ver. 3, 5. That the earth shook at the giving of the law, when God came down on mount Sinai, ver. 4, 6, 7. That God gave them water out of the rock, ver. 8. Let us acknowledge God's power and goodness in what he did for Israel, applying it to the much greater work of wonder, our redemption by Christ, and encouraging ourselves and others to trust in God in the greatest straits.

The psalmist is here remembering the days of old, and the wonders which their fathers told them of, Judg. 6. 13; for time, as it does not wear out the guilt of sin, so it should not wear out the sense of mercy.

Let it never be forgotten that God brought Israel out of the house of bondage with a high hand and a stretched out arm. The Israelites, it seems, preserved their own language in Egypt. By this distinction they kept up an earnest of their deliverance.

When God delivered them out of the hand of their oppressors, it was, that they might serve him, both in holiness and in righteousness, in the duties of religious worship, and in obedience to the moral law. All the world is God's dominion, but Israel was so in a peculiar manner. What is God's sanctuary must be his dominion; those only have the privileges of his house, that submit to the laws of it. Christ has redeemed us, that he might bring us into God's service, and engage us for ever in it. When the Lord comes for the salvation of his people, he redeems them from the power of sin and Satan, separates them from an ungodly world, forms them to be his temple, and becomes their King.

The Red Sea was divided before the Israelites at their coming out of Egypt, and the river Jordan, when they entered into Canaan. There is no sea, no Jordan, so deep, so broad, but, when God's time is come for the redemption of his people, it shall be divided and driven back, if it stand in their way. Apply this, 1. To the planting of the christian church in the world. What ailed Satan and the powers of darkness, that they trembled as they did? Mark 1. 34. What ailed their idolatries that they died away before the gospel? What ailed the persecutors and opposers of the gospel, that they gave up their cause? It was the presence of the Lord, and that power which went along with the gospel. 2. To the work of grace in the heart. What turns the stream in a regenerate soul? What ails the lusts and corruptions, that they fly back, that prejudices are removed, and the whole man becomes new? It is at the presence of God's Spirit that imaginations are cast down, 2 Cor. 10. 5.

The earth shook and trembled, when God came down on mount Sinai to give the law. The trembling of the mountains before the Lord may shame the stupidity and obduracy of the children of men, who are not moved at the discoveries of his glory. At the presence of the Lord, not only those mountains, but the earth itself may well tremble, since it has lain under a curse for man's sin: see Ps. 104. 32; Isa. 64. 2, 3.

God supplied them with water out of the rock, which followed them through the dry and sandy deserts. As they were protected, so they were provided for by miracles; for such was that fountain of waters into which the rock, the flinty rock was turned, and that rock was Christ, 1 Cor. 10. 4. For he is a Fountain of living waters to his Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace.

And as the Son of God, the Rock of ages, gave himself to death, to open a fountain to wash away their sins, and to supply them with waters of life and consolation, they need not fear that any blessing is too great to expect from his unfathomable love. But let sinners fear before their just and holy Judge. His voice from mount Sinai may well alarm those who break his holy law, and neglect the salvation of his gospel. What then will be their consternation at the day of judgment! Let us now prepare to meet our

God, that we may not be terrified, but may have confidence before him at his coming.

PSALM CXV.

In this psalm we are taught to give glory, (1.) To God, and not to ourselves, ver. 1. To God, and not to idols, ver. 2—8. (2.) We must give glory to God by trusting in him, and in his promise and blessing, ver. 9—15. By blessing and praising him, ver. 16—18.

Ver. 1—8. Boasting is here for ever excluded, ver. 1. Let no opinion of our own merits have any place either in our prayers or in our praises, but let both centre in God's glory. We must not imagine that we do any thing for God by our own strength, or deserve any thing by our own righteousness; but all the good we do, is done by the power of his grace, and all the good we have, is the gift of his mere mercy, and therefore he must have all the praise. When conscious of our unworthiness, so that our hopes are ready to be extinguished, we have a never failing plea, and may entreat the Lord to save and bless us, for the glory of his mercy and truth in Jesus Christ. Are we in pursuit of any mercy, and wrestling with God for it, we must take encouragement, in prayer, from God only. Lord, do so for us; not that we may have the credit and comfort of it, but that thy mercy and truth may have the glory of it. This is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer; Hallowed be thy name. This also must satisfy us, if our prayers be not answered in the letter of them. What ever becomes of us, unto thy name give glory: see John 12. 27, 28. This passage is evidently a prayer for deliverance, though it is often quoted as a thanksgiving for benefits received.

The reproach of the heathen is here for ever silenced. Their gods are senseless things. The make of them is from the artificer; they are creatures of men's vain imaginations, and the works of men's hands, and therefore can have no divinity in them. The painter, the carver, the statuary, can put no life into them, and therefore no sense. They have not the least sign or symptom of life, but are as dead, after the priest has pretended to consecrate them, and call a deity into them, as they were before. The psalmist hence infers the folly of their worshippers, ver. 8.

7. Nor make a mournful voice as a dove; so the word is translated, *Isa.* 38. 14. They do not even sound a note as a bird, much less utter any articulate sound.—*Gill.*

Ver. 9—18. In these verses we are all earnestly exhorted to repose unshaken confidence in God. It is folly to trust in dead images, but it is wisdom to trust in the living God, for he is a Help and a Shield to those that do trust in him. Wherever there is right fear of God, there may be a cheerful faith in him: those who reverence his word, may rely upon it.

Good reason is given why we should stay ourselves upon the Lord. Consider what we have experienced, ver. 12. All our comforts are derived from God's thoughts to us-ward; he has been mindful of us, though we have forgotten him. Let this engage us to trust in him, that we have found him faithful. See what we may expect. From what he has done for us, we may infer, He will bless us; he that has been our Help and our Shield, will be so; he that has remembered us in our low estate, will not forget us. The greatest need his blessing, and it shall not be denied to the meanest that fear him. Both the weak in grace and the strong, shall be blessed of God, the lambs and the sheep of his flock.

It is promised, The Lord shall increase you. God's blessing gives an increase, especially in spiritual blessings. The increase of knowledge and wisdom, of grace, holiness, and joy, to believers and their children.

We are excited to praise God by the psalmist's example. God is to be praised; he is greatly to be praised. His goodness is large, for the earth he has given to the children of men, having designed it, when he made it, for their use. Not but that still the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; but he has let out that vineyard to these unthankful husbandmen, and from them he expects services; for though he has given them the earth, his eye is upon them, and he will call them to render an account how they use it. From the highest heavens, it is certain God beholds all the children of men; to them he has given the earth; but to the children of God heaven is given.

The dead are not capable of praising him, nor any that go into silence. The souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burdens of the flesh, do praise God, are still praising him; but

the dead body cannot praise God; death puts an end to our glorifying God in this world of trial and conflict; the grave is a land of darkness and silence. This they plead with God, for deliverance out of the hand of their enemies. The dead praise not the Lord, as we do in the business and for the comforts of this life: see *Ps.* 30. 9; 88. 10.

Therefore it concerns us to praise him. Others are dead, and an end is thereby put to their service, and therefore we will seek to do the more for God. We will not only do it ourselves, but will engage others to do it; to praise him when we are gone, that he may be praised for evermore. *Hallelujah.*

Lord, thou art the only object of faith and love; the Author, the Giver, the Preserver, the Restorer, the sum and substance of all that is excellent, blessed, and glorious. Help us to praise thee while living and when dying, that thy name may be the first and last upon our lips. And let the sweet savour of that name refresh our souls for ever.—(37.)

PSALM CXVI.

The psalmist (1.) Declares his love to the Lord, who heard his prayer, delivered him from deep distress, and gave him peace. He resolves to call upon him, and to walk before him all his life, ver. 1—9. (2.) He records his temptation, and his victory over it by faith, ver. 10, 11, purposing to render his gratitude publicly among the Lord's people, ver. 12—19.

Ver. 1—9. The psalmist had evidently been in great distress. The expressions imply that terror of conscience, and sense of wrath, which have in them something of the nature of hell, though often felt for a time by those who are heirs of heaven.

We have many reasons for loving the Lord, but are never so affected by his loving-kindness as when he has relieved us out of deep distress. When a poor sinner is awakened to a sense of his state, and fears that he must soon sink under the just wrath of God, then the sorrows of death and the pains of hell get hold upon him, and he finds trouble and sorrow. But let all such, without delay, call upon the Lord to deliver their souls, and they will find him most gracious and true to his promise; his justice reconciled with his mercy. Neither ignorance nor guilt will prevent their salvation, when they

put their trust in the Lord; being raised up from their low estate, they will learn to love him as long as they live.

The Lord's ways are not our ways. He is righteous, and does no wrong in afflicting; he is gracious, and kind in supporting and delivering. Let us all speak of God as we have found him; and have we ever found him otherwise than just and good? No, our God is merciful, merciful to us; and it is of his mercies that we are not consumed. Let those who labour and are heavy laden come to him; that they may find rest to their souls. Let believers keep close to that rest; and if at all drawn from it, let them haste to return, remembering how bountifully the Lord hath dealt with them. Having our souls delivered from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling, we should deem ourselves bound to walk as in his presence. It is of God's great mercy to us that we are alive; the deliverance of the soul from spiritual and eternal death is especially to be acknowledged by all those who are now sanctified, and shall be shortly glorified. It is a great mercy to be kept from occasions of sorrow, or from being swallowed up with over-much sorrow. His feet were kept from falling into sin, and so into misery. It is a great mercy, when our feet are almost gone, to have God hold us by the right hand, 73. 23; so that though we enter into temptation, we are not overcome and overthrown by the temptation. But when we enter the heavenly rest, deliverance from sin and sorrow will be complete, our tears will be finally wiped away, our feet will no more slip; but we shall behold the glory of the Lord, and walk in his presence, in the land of the living, with delight we cannot now conceive.

This is a psalm of gratitude. An affectionate acknowledgment of the mercies of God not only makes us find our rest in him, but makes his mercies to rest with us. It increases the sweetness of every comfort; it purifies its nature, and prolongs its duration. If the believer can take peace in any thing while at a distance from God, it is a fearful symptom. But when the Lord hath given him peace, when he has seen marks of distinguishing love in mercies, when he has tasted consolation under sufferings and communion with God, will not this dispose him to rest in God, to improve the happy season, and desire its continuance? All

things else are vain; but complete satisfaction is there.—(66.)

Ver. 10—19. While here we must walk by faith, and should continually pray that our faith may be increased, for it may be greatly tried. When discomposed by temptations, we do best to hold our peace, for we are apt to speak unadvisedly, and we may even be tempted to treat as liars those who would encourage us from the promises of God's word. Yet there may be true faith where there are workings of unbelief; but then faith will prevail in the conflict; and being humbled for our distrust of God's word, we shall experience his faithfulness to it.

What can the redeemed sinner, or what can those who have been delivered from trouble or distress render to the Lord for his benefits? We cannot in any way profit him. Our best is unworthy of his acceptance; yet we ought to devote ourselves and all we have to his service. And having received many benefits from God, we should inquire, What we shall render? While enjoying secret communion with him, we should also make an open profession of our faith in him, and love to him. Thus every one who has found peace and deliverance through the blood of Christ, should pay his vows in the presence of all his people.

I will take the cup of salvation; I will offer the drink-offerings appointed by the law, in token of my thankfulness to God, and rejoice with my friends in God's goodness to me. This is called the cup of deliverance, because drunk in memory of deliverance. The pious Jews had also a cup of blessing, at their private meals, which the master of the family drank first of, with thanksgiving to God, and all at his table drank with him. But some understand it not of the cup that he would present to God, but of the cup that God would put into his hand. I will receive the cup of affliction; that cup, that bitter cup, which is yet sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a cup of salvation, Phil. 1. 19. This shall turn to my salvation; it is a means of spiritual health. God, having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands, I will readily take it, and not dispute it; but welcome his holy will. The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not take it, and drink it? John 18. 11. The cup of consolation; I will

receive the benefits God bestows upon me as from his hand, and taste his love in them, as that which is the portion not only of mine inheritance in the other world, but of my cup in this.

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving; the thank-offerings which God required, Lev. 7. 11, 12, &c. Those whose hearts are truly thankful, will express it in thank-offerings. We must first give ourselves to God as living sacrifices, Rom. 12. 1; 2 Cor. 8. 5, and then lay out of what we have, for his honour, in works of piety and charity. Doing good and communicating are sacrifices for which God is well pleased, Heb. 13. 15, 16; and this must accompany our giving thanks to his name. Why should we offer that to God which costs us nothing?

God has a people, even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy; that have received mercy from him, and show mercy for his sake. We should be willing to die, to die for Christ, if we are called to it: let that be precious to us, which is so to God, ver. 15.

Having asked, What shall I render? the psalmist surrenders himself, which was more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice. I am thy servant; I choose to be so, I resolve to be so, I will live and die in thy service. It is no disparagement, but an honour to be the servant of the God of heaven. Let others serve what master they will, truly I am thy servant. Two ways men came to be servants. 1. By birth. Lord, I was born in thy house, I am the son of thine handmaid, and therefore thine. It is a great mercy to be the children of godly parents. 2. By redemption. He that procured the release of a captive, took him for his servant. Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds, those sorrows of death that compassed me, thou hast discharged me from them, and therefore I am thy servant, and entitled to thy protection, as well as obliged to thy work. The very bonds thou hast loosed, shall tie me faster unto thee.

Such are the true saints of God, in whose lives and deaths he will be glorified; their souls none can destroy; none can even shorten their appointed period on earth. But when the measure of their trials and services is accomplished, their God and Saviour will remove them to that New Jerusalem, where they will pay their vows with all the redeemed, and offer eternal sacrifices of praise and

thanksgiving to Him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his precious blood. Let us then give diligence to make our calling and election sure; let us trust the Lord in the path of duty; let us fear no danger, and decline no difficulty in his service. Let us learn to consider the day of our death as the period of our labours and conflicts, our entrance into rest, glory, and happiness.

PSALM CXVII.

Here is a solemn call to all nations to praise God, ver. 1. And proper matter for that praise suggested, ver. 2. We are soon weary indeed of well doing, if we keep not up those pious and devout affections with which the spiritual sacrifice of praise ought to be kindled and kept burning.

The inscription of this psalm in the Syriac version is remarkable; "It is said concerning those of the house or companions of Ananias, when they came out of the furnace, Dan 3. 27. Likewise it foretells the calling of the Gentiles by the declarations of the gospel."

This is a gospel psalm. The apostle, Rom. 15. 11, quotes it as a proof that the gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by the Gentile nations, which yet was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews. Why should that offend them, when it is said, and they themselves had often sung it, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye people?

We have here the vast extent of the gospel church, ver. 1. For many ages, in Judah only was God known, and his name praised. There was no devotion paid, at least none openly, to the living and true God. But here all nations are called upon to praise the Lord, which could not be applied to the old testament times: this call was not then given to any of the Gentile nations, much less to all, in a language they understood; and unless the people of any land became Jews, they were not admitted to praise God with them. But the gospel of Christ is ordered to be preached to all nations, and by him those that were afar off are made nigh. This was the mystery which was hid in prophecy for many ages, but was at length revealed in the accomplishment, That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph. 3. 3, 6.

Observe here who should be admitted into the church; all nations, and all

people, The original words are the same that are used for the heathen who rage, and the people that imagine against Christ, 2. 1; they that had been enemies to his kingdom, should become his willing subjects.

Their admission into the church is foretold by a repeated call to praise him. The tidings of the gospel, being sent to all nations, should give them cause to praise God; and the power of gospel grace would give them hearts to praise him, Jer. 13. 11.

We are the very persons to whom the Holy Spirit here speaks, whom he calls upon to join his ancient people in praising the Lord. His merciful kindness hath been very great to us sinners of the Gentiles; his truth is displayed in the fulfilment of the prophecies, in sending the Saviour, and in calling us into the church. Grace hath thus abounded to millions of perishing sinners; many nations have the benefit of his holy word; and we are invited to partake of his salvation.

Let us then not listen to the offers of the grace of God in vain; may we come to trust in his mercy and his truth for the fulfilment of all his gracious promises to our own souls; may we make it our business to glorify our God in word and in deed; and may we still pray for that time when all nations of the earth shall show forth his praises, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The unsearchable riches of gospel grace are to be the matter of our praise, ver. 2. In the gospel, those attributes of God, his mercy and his truth, shine most bright in themselves, and most comfortably to us. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts, and his truth the foundation of all our hopes; and therefore for both we must praise the Lord.

PSALM CXVIII.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he had gained full possession of the kingdom to which he had been anointed. He then invites his friends to join him in a believing expectation of the promised Messiah. To him it is certain the prophet bears witness in the latter part of the psalm. Christ applies it to himself, Matt. 21. 42; and the former part of the psalm may fairly be referred to him and his undertaking. In it, (1.) David calls upon God to give to God the glory of

his goodness, ver. 1—4. He encourages himself and others to trust in God, from the experience he had of God's power and pity, ver. 5—18. (2.) He gives thanks for his advancement to the throne, as it was a figure of the exaltation of Christ, ver. 19—23. The people, the priests, and the psalmist himself triumph in the prospect of the Redeemer's kingdom, ver. 24—29. In singing this psalm, let us glorify God for his goodness to us, and especially in Jesus Christ.

Ver. 1—18. The psalmist here preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might thence fetch both songs of praise, and supports of faith. David had, in his time, gone through many difficulties, which gave him great experience of God's goodness.

The account David here gives of his troubles is very applicable to our Lord Jesus; many hated him without a cause; Jews and Romans compassed him about; they thrust sore at him; the devil did so when he tempted him, his persecutors did so when they reviled him; nay, the Lord himself chastened him sorely, bruised him, and put him to grief, that by his stripes we might be healed.

God heard his prayer. God baffled the designs of his enemies. They are quenched as the fire of thorns, ver. 12, which burns furiously for a while, makes a noise and a great blaze, but is presently cut. They thrust sore at him, but the Lord helped him to maintain his ground. Our spiritual enemies had long ago been our ruin, if God had not been our Helper.

This also is applicable to Jesus Christ; God answered him, quenched the fire of his enemies' rage, which did but consume themselves; for through death he destroyed him that had the power of death. He helped him through his undertaking; and thus far he did not give him over unto death, that death had no dominion over him.

This favour encouraged the psalmist to trust in God, and enabled him to triumph in that trust. God is sometimes the Strength of his people, when he is not their Song; we have spiritual supports, though they are not spiritual delights; but if he be both, we have abundant reason to triumph in him. For, if he be our Strength and our Song, he is become not only our Saviour, but our Salvation.

Whether the believer reviews his former experience, tracing back his comforts to the everlasting goodness and mercy of God; or whether he looks forward to the blessing secured to him, he will find abundant cause for joy and praise. The substance of the song of the redeemed soul ever was, and will be, The Lord is good, because his mercy endureth for ever. No one ever yet called earnestly upon the Lord but was enabled to say, The Lord answered me, and set me at liberty. Every answer to our prayers is an evidence that he is on our side; and then we need not fear what man can do unto us. As it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes, we should, without any undue compliances, conscientiously do our duty to all, and trust in the Lord alone to accept and bless us.

Though Satan thrusts sore at us, that we may fall into sin and misery, trusting in the Lord we may overcome him; for the Lord is the strength and song of every believer, and is become his salvation. Nor need we desire to partake the carnal, vain, vanishing mirth of the ungodly; the voice of rational rejoicing and of salvation is among the righteous, while they are safe under the protection of the Lord. With peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and liberty to cast all their cares upon Him who careth for them, they possess a lively hope of an incorruptible inheritance; though their bodies must drop into the grave, their souls shall live and declare the works of the Lord.

It is not worth while to live for any other purpose than to declare the works of God, for his honour, and the encouragement of others to serve Him and trust in him. Such were the triumphs of the Son of David, in the assurance he had of the success of his undertaking, and that the good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand.

Ver. 19—29. We have here a prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applies it directly to the chief priests and scribes; and none of them could charge him with misapplying it, Acts 4. 11.

The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him that hath made the name of the Lord. He seeks admission, granted him, Knock, and it shall be opened unto

you. Some, by this gate, understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God, and our praises are accepted; he is the Way; there is no coming to the Father but by him, John 14. 6; he is the Door, John 10. 9; he is the Gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only, the righteous, and they only, shall enter. The psalmist triumphs in the discovery, that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now opened. He promises to give thanks to God for this favour, ver. 21. They that saw Christ's day at so great a distance, saw cause to praise God for the prospect.

The prophecy itself, ver. 22, 23, may have some reference to David's preferment; but its principal reference is to Christ: and here we have,

1. His humiliation; he is the Stone which the builders refused; he is the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands, Dan. 2. 34. He is a Stone, not only for strength and firmness, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a precious Stone, 1 Pet. 2. 4, 6. This Stone was rejected by the builders, by the rulers and people of the Jews, Acts 4. 8, 10, 11; they would not build their faith upon him, nor join themselves to him; they would go on in their building without him. They trampled upon this Stone, threw it among the rubbish out of the city; nay, they were offended at it. This proved the ruin of those that thus made light of him. Rejecters of Christ are rejected of God.

2. His exaltation; he is advanced to be above all, and all in all. He is the chief Corner-stone in the foundation, in whom Jew and Gentile are united, that they may be built up one holy house. He is the chief Top-stone, in whom the building is completed, and who must in all things have the pre-eminence, as the Author and Finisher of our faith. Thus highly has God exalted him; and we, in compliance with God's design, must make him the Foundation of our hope.

All this is the Lord's doing; it is his counsel, it is his contrivance; both the humiliation and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus were his work, Acts 2. 23; 4. 27, 28. Christ's name is Wonderful; and the redemption he wrought on the most amazing of all God's glorious works, is what the saints desire to look into, and will be entering to eternally

much more ought we to admire it, who owe our all to it.

The whole time of the gospel dispensation, that accepted time, that day of salvation, is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or, it may very fitly be understood of the christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection; so here is the doctrine of the christian sabbath. It is the day which the Lord has distinguished from other days; he has made it for man: it is therefore called the Lord's day. The duty of the sabbath, the work to be done in his day is here declared, We will rejoice and be glad in it; not only that such a day is appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming the Head of the corner. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, then they are to us as the days of heaven.

When the Redeemer left the grave, a glorious day began, which knows no night. Our Sun of righteousness arose to set no more, and our weekly commemoration of that event, on the Lord's day, is the preparation for our celebrating an eternal sabbath in heaven, to his glory.

With good reason did our blessed Saviour remove the sabbath to the day of his resurrection, the day which the Lord hath made, when now the Stone which the builders refused was become the headstone in the corner.—(45.)

Let the exalted Redeemer have the acclamations of the people. Hosanna signifies, Save now, I beseech thee. Lord, save me, I beseech thee. Let this Saviour be my Saviour, my Ruler. Let me be taken under his protection, and owned as one of his willing subjects. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, 72. 3. Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let Divine grace go on in my heart, conquering, and to conquer.

We must bless his faithful ministers that come in his name, and receive them for his sake, Isa. 52. 7; John 13. 20. We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his Church; for the ripening of things for his second coming; and that he who has said, Surely I come quickly, would even so come.

Let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered to his honour, who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice. Here is the privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ. God is Jehovah; he is known by that name, a God per-

forming what he has promised, and perfecting what he has begun, Exod. 6. 3. He has favoured us, and has given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. The day which the Lord has made, brings light with it, true light. The duty this privilege calls for is here set forth; Bind the sacrifice with cords, that, being killed, the blood may be sprinkled upon the horns of the altar, according to the law. Or this may have a peculiar significancy here; the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves. Not to be slain upon the altar, but living sacrifices, Rom. 12. 1, to be bound to the altar; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as a sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back.

The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of Divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him. He will praise God himself; and he will have all about him give thanks to God for these glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord. In him it is that mercy endures for ever; in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it, for God's glory must be the beginning and the end of all our addresses to him. And this fitly closes a prophecy of Christ. The angels give thanks for man's redemption; Glory to God in the highest, Luke 2. 14, for there is on earth peace; to which we must echo with our hosannas, as the multitudes did to Christ, Luke 19. 38. Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore, Glory in the highest.

22, 23. Even the Jewish commentators acknowledge that these verses refer expressly to the Messiah. No text in the Old Testament is so often quoted in the New, Matt. 21. 42; Mark 12. 10, 11; Luke 20. 17; Acts 4. 11; Eph. 2. 20; 1 Pet. 2. 4.

27. The Greek version is, "Solemnize a festival with thick boughs, even unto the horns of the altar." See *Hammond*. The lowest part of the horns was ten feet from the ground, according to *Lightfoot*; therefore it can hardly be taken that the sacrifice could stand tied to the altar till it was offered. The Chaldean paraphrase is, "Tie the lamb that is to be offered, with cords, till ye come to offer him, and sprinkle his blood upon the horns of the altar."

Kennicott supposes that ver. 20 was sung by the priest; 21, by the king; 22, 23, 24, by a chorus of people; 25, by the king; 26, 27, by the priest; 28, by the king; 29, by the whole assembly.

PSALM CXIX.

The general scope and design of this psalm is to magnify the Divine law, and make it honourable; to set forth the excellency and usefulness of Divine revelation, and to recommend it by the psalmist's own example, who speaks by experience. There are ten words by which Divine revelation is called in this psalm, and they are synonymous; each of them expresses the whole compass of what God expects from us, and what we may expect from him. The things contained in the scripture are here called, 1. God's law; they are enacted by him as our Sovereign. 2. His way; they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience. 3. His testimonies; they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. 4. His commandments; given with authority, and, as the word signifies, lodged with us as a trust. 5. His precepts; prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. 6. His word, or saying; it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ, the essential, eternal Word, is all in all in it. 7. His judgments; framed in infinite wisdom, and by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His righteousness; it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. 9. His statutes; they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. His truth or faithfulness; the principles upon which the Divine law is built, are eternal truths. There is hardly a verse in all this psalm, in which there is not one or other of these ten words.

The structure of this psalm is peculiar, divided into twenty-two parts, agreeing with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, each part, and its several verses, beginning with the corresponding letter of the alphabet. The whole psalm is in the form of an ejaculatory address, with the exception of the first three verses, which may almost be considered as a preface to the whole; and one other verse towards the conclusion, where the psalmist rebukes the ungodly. The connexion between the verses is not always easy to trace. Probably nothing more was intended than to record the exercises of his heart at different periods, and under different circumstances.—*Bridges*.

Several of the ancients, particularly the Greek fathers, have considered this psalm as an abridgement of David's life; in which he expresses all the states through which he had passed; the trials, persecutions, succours, and encouragements he had received. Though the most judicious interpreters assign it to the times of the Babylonish captivity, yet there are many things in it descriptive of David's state, experience, and affairs, that lead us to think it might have come from his pen; or, if composed at or under the captivity, that it was formed out of his notes and memoranda.—*A. Clarke*.

K. ALEPH, 1—3. This psalm may be considered as the statement of a believer's experience. As far as our views, desires, intentions, and affections, agree with those here expressed, they evidently come from the influences of the Holy Spirit, and no further. But our thoughts will frequently be led from the christian's character and experience, to Christ. The pardoning mercy of God in Christ, is the only source of a sinner's happiness; as he is thereby brought into the way of being blessed; but the evidence of that happiness consists in walking before God in all his commandments and ordinances blameless. They walk in the law of the Lord. And those are most happy who are preserved most free from the defilement of sin, who most simply believe God's testimonies, and depend on his promises. They are most like Him in whom they are justified, and glory.

They seek him with their whole heart. They do not seek themselves and their own desires, but God only; they aim that God may be glorified in their obedience, and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be the Rewarder, the Reward, of all those who thus seek him diligently, seek him with the heart; for that God looks at and requires; and with the whole heart; for if the heart be divided between him and the world, it is faulty.

They carefully avoid all sin; They do no iniquity; they walk in his ways; they do not allow themselves in any sin; they do not make a practice of it; they are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways.

4. The tempter would possess men with an opinion, that they are at liberty to make the word of God their rule or not. He taught our first parents to question God's command; therefore we are concerned to be well established in this; Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.

5. See how the desire and prayer of a good man exactly agree with the will and command of God; O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Thou wouldst have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I fain would keep them. This is the will of God, even our sanctification; and it should be our will.

6. Those who have sincere respect to

all God's commandments, shall not be ashamed; not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have confidence toward God, and boldness of access to his throne of grace, 1 John 3. 21. They shall have credit before men, and clearness and courage in their own souls. If a man only respect some of the commandments, and expect by one instance of obedience to purchase indulgence for disobedience in another, his hypocrisy will be detected: if he be not ashamed in this world, everlasting contempt will be his portion.

7. The psalmist knew much, but he was still pressing forward, and desired to know more; as far as perfection is attainable in this life, he reached towards it. He coveted to learn the laws of God, that he might give God the glory. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I have learned thy judgments. Divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for. As the believer's desire and purpose are to keep the statutes of God, so his dependence is upon God to enable him and comfort him in so doing.

8. Those have well learned God's statutes, who are come to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them. O forsake me not; leave me not to myself, withdraw not thy Spirit and grace from me, for then I shall not keep thy statutes. Good men see themselves undone if God forsakes them; for then the tempter will be too hard for them.

The result of our meditations on God's word, and on the advantage of studying that we may observe its directions, should always be, a resolution to do so, and a prayer for grace to execute that resolution. Lord, we will keep thy statutes, for love can do all things when thou hast shed it abroad in our hearts.—(32.)

3. BETH, 9. Here is a weighty question asked; Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Beside original corruption, all have added thereto. Young people are concerned to get their hearts renewed, and their lives reformed, that they may have a good conscience, and a good name.

A satisfactory answer is given to this question. They must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God as a standard. The ruin of the young is

either living by no rule at all, or choosing to themselves false rules: let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by scripture-rules.

10. Learn hence that to be sensible of our own imperfections, sins, and dangers, seeking unto God who is all-sufficient for the relief of sin and misery, seeking for more and for nearer communion with him, is sincerity in religion. To be diffident of our own wisdom and strength, and to depend upon God, earnestly praying to be kept and recalled from wandering, proves the sincerity of the purpose of holiness. The progress of the believer must be from the present influences of grace, sustaining what was given before and furnishing fresh supplies.—(16.)

11. God's word is treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safe but in our hearts. If we have it only in our houses and hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us; but if it be in our hearts, and the impressions remain on our souls, it is safe.

Good men are afraid of sin; the most effectual way to prevent it, is, to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master, with, It is written; and may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements, and his threatenings to its menaces.

12. Blessed art thou, O Lord. Thou hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me therefore, and then accept me. In all our prayers, we should intermix praises. Teach me thy statutes; give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the Fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this supply from that Fountain, this blessing from that Blessedness. Let this be our plea with Him to teach us his statutes, that, being partakers of his holiness, we may also partake his blessedness.

13. He showed how full he was of the word of God; for it is of the abundance of the heart, that the mouth speaks. Thus he did good with his knowledge. Those whose hearts are fed with the bread of life, should with their lips feed many.

14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that path of serious godliness which they point out to me. I have rejoiced in this, as much as in all

riches. In the way of God's commandments I can say, Soul, take thine ease; in true religion there is the unsearchable riches of Christ. The experienced believer finds far greater joy in the ways of God's testimonies than wealth can confer; and these joys and these riches alone are attainable by all who seek for them.

15. Those who have found pleasure in the ways of God, are likely to proceed and persevere in them. I will have respect unto thy ways, as the traveller has to his road, which he is careful not to miss. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purpose, unless we respect them as our rule, and our good thoughts produce good works, and good intentions in them.

He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts. He not only discoursed of them to others, (many do that to show their knowledge and authority,) but he communed with his own heart about them.

16. He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God. I will still, I will for ever delight myself in thy statutes; not only think of them, but do them with delight. I will not forget thy word; not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it. Those who meditate in God's word, and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

It will be well to try the sincerity of our obedience by tracing the spring of it; and the reality of our love by our fruitfulness and cheerfulness in appointed duties. We may also here observe an evidence of adoption. The servant may perform the statutes of God, but it is only the son who delights in them. Under Divine teaching what delight will be found in God's statutes!—(6.)

1. GIMEL, 17. Deal bountifully with me, that I may live. If God deals in strict justice with us, we die, we all perish; if these forfeited lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God deals bountifully with us, according to his mercy, not according to our deserts. Therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. The Lord dealeth bountifully with all his servants, who being delivered from the wrath to come, and raised from the death of sin, find true life in keeping his word.

18. There are wondrous things in God's law, which we are all concerned to behold. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and gospel, must beg him to open their eyes, and

to give them understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God; even those in whose hearts God has said, Let there be light, have need to be further enlightened.

Amend in us, O Lord, our natural ignorance; giving us the light of thy Spirit, by which we may apprehend thy law in its spiritual sense, and thy whole word in the mysteries of thy promised salvation; which otherwise are incomprehensible to us, Matt. 16. 17; 1 Cor. 2. 7, 11.—(16.)

19. I am a stranger in the earth. We all are so, and must so account ourselves. Lord, show thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it, that it may be to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. Believers feel themselves strangers here on earth; they fear missing their way even in part, lest they should lose comfort by erring from God's commandments.

20. His desire was importunate; My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments. He had been led to desire the knowledge of God's word with such intenseness that his soul was ready to break or faint, when he, at any time, dreaded being left in ignorance or error. It was constant; at all times; not now and then in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God; but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul to hunger after the word of God, as necessary food there is no living without.

21. God resists the proud; and they that throw off the commands of the law, lay themselves under its curse, Gal. 3. 10; they are often severely rebuked in this world. There is something of pride at the bottom of every wilful sin; They embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, then no wonder they err in practice. This is the effect of their pride.

22. It has often been the lot of those that do well, to be ill spoken of. God can silence lying lips; to him we may appeal, he will clear up our righteousness as the light, 37. 6. Reproach and contempt may humble and do us good, and then they shall be removed.

Let us beware of that way of escape which the insincere are ever ready to pursue in returning to the world. The desire to escape the cross will increase the difficulties in our path. Every compliance with the world against the voice of God,

is a step into by-paths, which deviate wider and wider from the strait and narrow way. Do we find the weight of the cross above that we are able? He that bore it for us will enable us to bear it for him; upheld by him we cannot sink.—(6.)

23. It is sad when those that should be the protectors of the innocent, are their betrayers. They were the princes of this world that vilified and crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. 2. 8. To make himself easy, he meditated in God's statutes, went on in duty, did not regard them: when they spake against him, he found that in the word of God which spake comfort to him; then none of these things moved him.

24. The testimonies of God comforted him, and were his delight. Sometimes the comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul, when other comforts are imbittered. God's statutes were his counsellors, and they counselled him to bear it patiently, and commit his cause to God. God's testimonies will be the best counsellors, both to princes and private persons. Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight, must take them for their counsellors, and be advised by them.

Such are the designs, purposes, and experiences of the true christian, in proportion to his knowledge and grace. May the Lord enable us to discern in this glass what we are, and direct us in exercising repentance of sin, faith in Christ, and in amending our lives according to his holy word.

7. DALETH, 25. While the souls of the children of this world cleave to the dust of the earth as their portion, and have no uneasiness about it, the children of light are often greatly burdened because of the remains of carnal affections in their hearts.

Observe the petition for relief, and the plea to enforce that petition. God's word is a means of quickening, it must be our guide and plea in every prayer.

26. I have declared my ways; my wants, and burdens, and troubles, that I meet with in my way; or my sins, my by-ways, I have made an ingenuous confession of them, and thou heardest me. It is an unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God, 1 John 5. 14, 15.

27. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. He does not say, Let me

know what the event will be; but tell me my duty, let me know what thou wouldst have me do. His word encourages, and by his grace he will answer, and grant the good desires he has planted in our hearts. We can talk best of God's wondrous works, the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts, and walk in that way.

28. The penitent melts in sorrow for sin; even the patient spirit may melt in the sense of affliction, it is then its interest to pour out its soul before God. He requests God would enable him to bear his affliction. Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the burdens of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail. Strengthen me according to thy word, As thy days, so shall thy strength be.

29. He prays that God would keep him from using unlawful, indirect means for extricating himself out of troubles. The way of lying means all false ways by which men deceive themselves and others, or are deceived by Satan and his instruments.

A course of lying, of deceit and dissimulation, every good man dreads, and we are all concerned to beg of God by his grace to keep us from it. They that know and love the law of God, desire to know it more, and love it better. We ought to reckon God's law a grant, a gift, an unspeakable gift, to value it, pray for it, and give thanks for it accordingly.

29. "The way of falsehood remove from me; and teach me thy law."—*Boothroyd.*

30. The way of truth means that true way which God hath revealed, by which we may come to him, and in which we may walk with him. The way of serious godliness is the way of truth; the only true way to happiness. As we must have the word in our heart by habitual conformity to it, so we must have actual regard to it upon all occasions.

31. Those who make religion their choice and rule, are likely to adhere to it faithfully; I have stuck to thy testimonies at all times, through all trials. Those who stick to the word of God, may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God. Lord, put me not to shame; never leave me to do that by which I shall shame myself, and do thou not reject my services, which would put me to the greatest confusion.

32. I will run the way of thy com-

mandments. Those that are going to heaven, should be still pressing forward. We run the way of our duty, when we are ready to it, and lay aside every weight, Heb. 12. 1. He depends upon God for grace to do so; I shall abound in thy work, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. God, by his Spirit, enlarges the hearts of his people, when he gives them wisdom, 1 Kings 4. 29, and when he sheds abroad his love in the heart, and puts gladness there. The believer prays to be set at liberty from every remainder of the bondage of sin.

71. HE, 33. Teach me the way of thy statutes, not the notions or language, but the way of applying them to myself, and in every doubtful case let me know what thou wouldest have me to do. If God, by his Spirit, gives a right and good understanding, I shall keep it to the end, to the end of my life. It will not avail the traveller to keep the way for a while, if he do not keep it to the end of his journey.

34. Give me an enlightened understanding; as well have no understanding as not have it sanctified. Nor will the Spirit of revelation, in the word, suffice, unless we have the Spirit of wisdom in the heart. This we are indebted to Christ for, 1 John 5. 20. I shall observe it with my whole heart. That way which the whole heart goes, the whole man goes.

35. He had prayed to God to enlighten his understanding, that he might know his duty; here he prays to God to bow his will, and quicken the active powers of his soul, that he might do his duty; for it is God that works in us both to will and to do, as well as to understand what is good, Phil. 2. 13. Our dependence must be upon the grace of God, for from him all our sufficiency is. God puts his Spirit within us, and so causes us to walk in his statutes.

36. He prays that God would make him willing. Duty is done with delight, when the heart is inclined to it: it is God's grace that inclines us, and the more backward we find ourselves to it, the more earnest we must be for that grace.

The sin he prays against is covetousness; restrain and mortify the inclination there is in me to covetousness. That is a sin which stands opposed to all God's testimonies: those therefore that would

have the love of God rooted in them, must get the love of the world rooted out of them; for the friendship of the world is enmity with God.

37. The honours, pleasures, and profits of the world, draw multitudes from the paths of religion and godliness; the eye, when fastened on these, infects the heart with the love of them, and so it is alienated from God and Divine things. Quicken me in thy way; to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit. Beholding vanity deadens us, and slackens our pace; a traveller must not stand gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view.

38. They that are God's servants may, in faith, pray that God would establish his word to them. What God has promised we must pray for; we must not ask more; we need not ask less. A good man is God's servant, subject to his law, and employed in his work, that is, devoted to his fear. The promises of God's word greatly relate to the preservation and sanctification of the true believer.

39. None that feel their own weakness, and the tendency of the heart to backslide, will think this prayer unseasonable or unnecessary. Turn away my reproach which I fear. Sometimes, when Satan has drawn a child of God into some worldly compliance, or has weakened his confidence, by tempting him to look to himself for some warrant of acceptance, he will turn back upon him, and reproach him with those very falls into which he had led him. Christians, are you harassed thus? Remember the only direction that meets your case; "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Victory must come from the cross of Christ. Yet we must not forget the acknowledgment, Thy judgments are good; we may accept it as the punishment of our iniquity, and hope and look for good to come out of it.—(6.)

40. Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will make us long for more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this desire after his precepts. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. Thou hast wrought in me this languishing desire; put life into me, that I may prosecute it; quicken me in thy righteousness. Where God has wrought to will, he will

work to do; and where he has wrought to desire, he will satisfy the desire.

How very beautiful is this portion of the psalm, considered with reference to the work of the Holy Ghost! His it is to quicken the soul, and to renew us after the relapses, wanderings, and coldness of our minds. Blessed and almighty Teacher, of thy grace and goodness work these tokens of thy favour in us and bless us in Christ, John 14. 26.—(37.)

1. Vau, 41. Our salvation must be attributed only to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Eternal life must be expected as the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jude 21. Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view; let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me, according to thy word, thy word of promise. We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it.

42. When God saves those out of troubles who trusted in him, he effectually silences those who would have shamed that counsel of the poor, 14. 6. When the salvation of the saints is completed, it will appear, beyond dispute, that it was not in vain to trust in God's word.

43. Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth. He means, Lord, let me have the wisdom and courage necessary to enable me to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it. We have need to pray to God, that we may never be afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. Lord, make me ready in the scriptures; if they be not at hand, my support and defence are departed from me. He professes his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace.

44. So shall I keep thy law continually. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law: continually, in a constant course of obedience: for ever and ever, without backsliding.

45. I will walk at liberty, not entangled with fetters of my own corruptions, free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly. The service of sin is perfect slavery, the service of God is perfect liberty. He seeks out God's precepts that he may obey them. He has no idea of final happiness, or of perfect liberty, but in the keeping of God's law.

46. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings. We must never be ashamed or afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings and rulers.

47. I will delight myself in thy commandments, in conversing with them, in conforming to them. I will never be so well pleased with myself, as when I do that which is pleasing to God. The more delight we take in the service of God, the nearer we come to the perfection we should aim at. I have loved them. I not only give consent to them as good, but take pleasure in them as good for me.

48. He would be diligent and vigorous in his duty; I will lift up my hands to thy commandments; which denotes not only a vehement desire toward them, I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go; but a close application of mind to the observance of them. I will not only praise but practise; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, I will put forth all the strength I have to do it. The hands that hang down, through sloth and discouragement, shall be lifted up, Heb. 12. 12. Something of this mind of Christ, is in every true disciple. All is defective in our judgment and affections which comes short of this. All is false and delusive in our experience which is opposed to it.

1. Zain, 49. Remember thy word unto thy servant. Those that make God's promises their portion, may with humble boldness make them their plea. Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken? and wilt thou not make it good? Gen. 32. 9. Has God kindled in us desires toward spiritual blessings more than toward any temporal good things; and will he not satisfy those desires? Has he filled us with hopes of those blessings; and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us, will, according to our faith, work for us.

50. Thy word hath quickened me. It made me alive when I was dead in sin; it has quickened me to that which is good, when I was backward and averse to it; and it has quickened me in that which is good, when I was cold and indifferent. The word of God has much that speaks comfort in affliction; but those only may apply it to themselves, who experience its quickening power. If through grace

it makes us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in all conditions.

51. A true servant of God believes the promises, and practises the precepts of his blessed Master. The haughty infidel will scoff at one part of his conduct, and the insolent worldling ridicule the other, but neither will induce him to disbelieve or to disobey. Let us be certain we have the Divine law for our warrant in what we believe, and then let not derision prevail upon us to decline from it.—(32.)

52. God's judgments of old, in our own early days, and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement in the way of God, for he is still the same.

53. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin is forsaking the law. He trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischiefs thereby done to the souls of men. He does not say, Horror has taken hold on me, because of their cruel designs against me, but, because of the contempt they put on God and his law. Sin is a monstrous and horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, Jer. 5. 30; 23. 14; Hos. 6. 10.

54. The believer dwells on earth, in the body, as in the house of his pilgrimage. Ere long he will be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. In the mean time, the statutes of the Lord are his songs; they supply him with subjects for joyful meditation, and grateful praise.

55. In the season of affliction, and in the silent hours of the night, he remembers the name of the Lord, and is thus animated to keep the law. God's name is the discovery he has made of himself to us in and by his word. We should always keep it in memory; when we are communing with our own hearts.

56. I had that which satisfied me, I had every thing that is comfortable, because I kept thy precepts. All that have made religion the first thing, will own that they have been unspeakable gainers by it. God's work is its own wages: a heart to obey the will of God is a most valuable reward of obedience; and we shall do the more in the service of God; the branch that bears fruit, is made more fruitful, John 15. 2.

¶ *Chorus*, 57. Others place their happiness in this world; they desire no

more, these are their good things, Luke 16. 25; but all that are sanctified take the Lord for the Portion of their inheritance, and their Cup, and nothing less will satisfy them. Having promised to keep his word, we must often put ourselves in mind of our promise, 39. 1.

58. He entreated God's favour, as one that knew he had forfeited it, was unworthy of it, and yet undone without it, but for ever happy if he could obtain it. He prayed, with his whole heart, knowing how to value the blessing he prayed for: the gracious soul is entirely set upon the favour of God, and is therefore importunate for it. He pleaded the promise of God; Be merciful to me, according to thy word. I desire the mercy promised, and depend upon the promise for it.

59. He thought what he should do, pondering the path of his feet, Prov. 4. 26, that he might walk surely; he thought on what he had done, reflected upon his life past, and recollected the steps he had taken. The word signifies a fixed, abiding thought. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other people's ways, who never think of their own; but let every man prove his own work. He turned from the by-paths to which he had turned aside, and returned to God's testimonies; not only his eye to them, but his feet; his affections to the love of God's word, and his conversation to the practice of it.

60. He turned immediately, and delayed not. It behoves sinners to hasten, and not delay to escape from that precipice on which they have so long trifled; and the believer will be equally in haste to obtain assurance of his safety, and to glorify God by keeping his commandments.

61. Worldly wealth we may be robbed of, but no care or grief should drive God's word out of our minds, or hinder our comfort of it, and converse with it. Nor must we ever think worse of the ways of God for any trouble we meet with in those ways, nor fear being losers by our religion at last.

61. The Greek version is, The cords of the wicked have entangled me.

62. He does not say, I will give thanks, because of thy favours to me, but, Because of thy righteous judgments; the disposals of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of. His heart was set upon thanksgivings; he would rise at midnight, to give thanks

to God. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When the psalmist found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those affections to God, not deferring, lest they should cool.

The great matter is, to be habitually disposed to bless God; there is no situation on earth in which a believer has not cause to be thankful. Let us feel ashamed that we are more reluctant to retrench our sleep to praise God, than others are to spend the time in their sinful pleasures.

63. Our love to the saints is sincere, when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them, and the service they do to him. He took such to be his companions, as feared God. The more the wicked hate God's people, the more they that keep his precepts should unite to comfort, edify, and pray for each other.

64. As the earth is filled with the mercies of the Lord, with the blessings of providence, and the glad tidings of free salvation, we should be more earnest in prayer to be taught the statutes of the Lord, that our hearts may be filled with his mercy, grace, and peace. He therefore prays that God would be good to him. Wilt thou not feed me with spiritual food, the bread of life, which my soul needs and craves, and cannot subsist without? A gracious heart will fetch arguments from every thing, to enforce petitions for Divine teaching.

D. TETH, 65. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant. However God has dealt with us, we must own he has dealt well with us, better than we deserve; and all in love, and to work for our good. Every past mercy of God to his servants, according to his word, encourages to pray for more wisdom and grace.

66. Many have knowledge, but little judgment; those who have both are well fortified against the snares of Satan, and well furnished for the service of God, and their generation. To this petition is added a plea, For I have believed thy commandments; received them, and consented to them that they are good, and submitted to their government.

67. He had experienced the temptations of a prosperous condition. Sin is going astray; and we are most apt to wander from God, when we are easy in the world. It is good for us, when afflicted, to remember how, and wherein we

went astray, before we were afflicted, that we may answer the end of the affliction. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin, and show us the vanity of the world. It should lead us all to leave our concerns to the disposal of God, seeing we know not what is good for us.

68. Lord, thou art the bountiful Benefactor of all. Instruct me in my duty, incline me to it, and enable me to do it. Incline our hearts to faith, obedience, and submission to thy holy will.

69. They forged a lie against him, but he will bear it patiently; he will keep that precept which forbids him to render railing for railing, and will sit down silent. He will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution; Let them say what they will, I will keep thy precepts.

70. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he allured by it from his duty; Their heart is as fat as grease. The proud are at ease; they are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it; and this makes them senseless, secure, and stupid. They are not sensible of the touch of the word of God, or his rod. They are sensual and voluptuous. The children of God, who are acquainted with spiritual pleasures, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

70. Their heart is void of all feeling. *Boothroyd.*

71. It has been good for God's people to be afflicted. A good lesson the psalmist had learnt by his afflictions. God visited him with affliction, that he might learn God's statutes; and the intention was answered, the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He that chastened him, taught him.

72. Not only God's promises, but even his law, his precepts, which are so unpleasant and hard to ungodly men, are more desirable and more needful and profitable, because they not only give us abundant satisfaction and comfort in this life, but they also conduct with safety and delight unto that eternal and most blessed life, where thousands of gold and silver bear no price.—(54.)

Job, 73. Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me. God made us to serve him, and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unable for his service, and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and Divine nature, otherwise we have the human nature in vain. We ought therefore

continually to beseech him, by his Holy Spirit, to give us understanding that we may learn and do his will.

74. The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. Observe his confidence in the hope of God's salvation; I have hoped in thy word, and I have not found it in vain to do so; it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectations from it.

75. God's promise was graciously performed. In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me, pursuant to the great design of my salvation. It is easier to own, in general, that God's judgments are right, than to own it when it comes to be our own case. This is no common attainment, even among true believers.

76. All his supports under affliction must come from mere mercy and compassion. Let them come to me for my comfort; that will comfort me when nothing else will. He pleads God's promise; the kindness which thou hast promised, and because thou hast promised it. Our Master has passed his word to all his servants, that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him.

77. The mercies of God are tender mercies, the mercies of a father unto his children, the compassion of a mother over her son. They come to us when we are not able to go to them. By them alone we live the life of faith, love, joy, and delight.—(32.)

78. The pride, blasphemy, and iniquity of the enemies of God, are forerunners of their confusion and destruction. The causeless reproach, like the curse causeless, may be easily slighted; it does not hurt us, and therefore should not move us. He could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in that.

79. He valued the good will of saints, and was desirous to keep up his interest in them, and communion with them. When those who fear God, and have known his righteous testimonies, imbibe jealousies, and prejudices, become reserved to, or oppose us, the trial is very heavy.

80. Soundness of heart signifies integrity and sincerity in our professed dependence on God, and devotedness to him. It is opposed to every kind and degree of hypocrisy. Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here, if it be repented of, or hereafter, if it be not.

81. The psalmist's soul fainted for the salvation of the Lord. He may here speak the language of the ancient church, as waiting for the coming of the promised Messiah, the salvation of God, and the consolation of Israel. But he seems rather to have expressed the state of his mind while he sought deliverance from his sins, his foes, and his fears.

82. Hope deferred made him sick and faint, his eyes failed looking out for the tokens or comforts of this expected salvation. But though we think the time long, ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still look for it, and resolve to take up with nothing short of it. When the eyes fail, yet faith must not.

83. His affliction was great, therefore he was an object of God's pity. Lord, make haste to help me, for I am become like a bottle in the smoke, a leathern bottle, which, if hung any while in the smoke, is dried and shrivelled up. We must, in every condition, be mindful of God's statutes; we may then pray and hope that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

84. He pleads the long continuance of his trouble. The days of my affliction are many; when wilt thou return in mercy to me? I am thy servant. The days of the believer's mourning shall be ended: though they appear tedious, they are but for a moment, compared with that eternal happiness which they are working out for them.

85. His enemies digged pits, employed craft as well as power for his ruin; without regard to, and in contempt of the law of God, which forbids to devise evil to our neighbour.

86. The commandments of God are true and faithful guides in the path of peace and safety. Nature is disquieted when persecuted wrongfully; but faith and grace are encouraged by that very consideration; we may best expect help from God when, like our Master, we do well and suffer for it. Help thou me; help me under troubles, that I may bear them patiently, and may hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles. God is an excellent comprehender, it is pity that it should ever be usy.

87. Wicked men may amuse the poor, the believer upon earth, but support of not induce him to forsake; may amuse the Lord will support his hour, it is the liver him out of their book to create

which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up, Exod. 3. 2.

88. We are here taught to depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work, and to depend upon it as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. The surest token of God's good will toward us, is his good work in us. Let us be animated by the loving-kindness of the Lord, holding fast his truth, and adhering to his precepts; we then may cheerfully leave all our concerns in his hands.

7. LAMED, 89. The psalmist acknowledges the unchangeableness of the word of God, and of all his counsels. For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled. Thou art the same, and with thee there is no variableness, and this is a proof of it. The settling of God's word in heaven, is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth. And his revealed will is as firm as his secret will.

89. Or, as the Syriac reads, "Thou art (or existest) for ever, O Jehovah; thy word is established in the heavens."

90. The promise is sure to every age of the church. He produces, for proof of it, the constancy of the course of nature; Thou hast established the earth, and it abides. The engagements of God's covenant are established on a firmer basis than the earth itself.

91. All the creatures in their places, and, according to their capacities, answer the ends of their creation; and shall man, who alone is endued with reason, and formed for immortality, be the only rebel, and the only unprofitable burden of the earth?

92. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, What profit is it, that we have served God? His converse with God's law, and his meditations on it, were delightful in solitude and sorrow. We may make a bible a pleasant companion at any time.

93. Those speak best of the things of God, who speak by experience, who can say that by the word the spiritual life has been begun, maintained, and strengthened, excited and comforted in them. It made them so; the word of God, out the grace of God, would not; but, ordinarily, the grace of God, by the word, and makes us of quickening. See the memories, namely, good that really quickens

us to, and in our duty, is not forgotten; though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain it is well.

94. I am thine, devoted to thee. He does not plead any good of his own, but God's proprietorship in him; I am thine, not my own, not the world's. I have sought thy precepts. This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all his, though they have not found perfection, are seeking it. He improves his claim; I am thine; save me, save me from sin, save me from ruin. Those that sincerely give themselves to God to be his, may be sure that he will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, Mal. 3. 18.

95. The constant character of the believer's walk is, enduring the enmity of the ungodly world—the wicked wait for him to destroy him—and in seeking his refuge in the word of God, the resources of peace and the hiding place of safety to which that blessed word directs him. It is the considering the Lord's testimonies, that draws out these blessings of refuge and comfort. Thus the Lord will keep the man in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on him, because he trusteth in him, Isa. 26. 3.—(6.)

96. Here we have the testimony of the psalmist, as to the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy. Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all things in this world, which pass for perfections. David, in his time, saw Goliath, the strongest, overcome; Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken; Abithophel, the wisest, befooled; Absalom, the fairest, deformed. The psalmist had seen an end of perfection, of all perfection; he saw it by faith, he saw it by observation. There is that to be done for us, which the creature cannot do, and it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity as we must. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass. He had seen the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for satisfaction; Thy commandment is broad, exceeding broad. The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times. The enlarged knowledge of the word of God will take us off from all confidence in man, or in our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness. Thus shall we be led to seek comfort and happiness from Christ alone as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

D. MEM, 97. What we love, we love to

think of; the word of God was his meditation, not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, but in the day, when he was full of business: all the day good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts; so full was he of the word of God.

98. He tells us here how he came by wisdom. Thou hast made me wise: all true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God, as the means; by his commandments. These are able to make us wise to salvation, and to furnish the man of God for every good work. These are ever with me. A good man, wherever he goes, carries his bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.

99. The simplest christian, who by faith and prayer applies the knowledge which he obtains in the scriptures of truth, in useful knowledge and practical wisdom, will very far exceed all those teachers who, leaning to their own understandings, reject or are superficially acquainted with the oracles of God. By meditation on God's testimonies we preach to ourselves, and so we come to understand more than our teachers, when we understand our own hearts.

100. The word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition, and all the learning handed down from preceding ages. The written word is a surer guide to heaven than all the fathers, the teachers, and ancients of the church; and the precepts of sacred writings kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all other writings.

101. I checked myself and drew back, as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation. Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet, being a sinful way, it was an evil way, and he refrained his feet from it, foreseeing the end of that way. His care was universal; he shunned every evil way. We cannot with any comfort or boldness attend God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while under guilt, or in any by-way.

102. He had not chosen any other rule than the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. The cause of his constancy was, For thou hast taught me; it was Divine grace in my heart, that enabled me to receive those

instructions. All the saints are taught of God, he gives them understanding.

103. The soul hath its taste as well as the body; that taste is in good order when the words of scripture are sweet to the soul as honey is to the mouth. If it is not always thus, it is because our taste is vitiated by the world and the flesh; our relish for the word of God will be greatest when that for the world and the flesh is least, as in time of affliction, sickness, and death.—(32.)

104. The way of sin is a false way, it deceives, and will ruin all that walk in it; it is the wrong way, and yet it seems to a man right, Prov. 14. 12. Every good man hates the way of sin, he not only refrains from it, but has a hatred to it, and a dread of it. Those who hate sin as sin, will hate all sin, have every false way, because every false way leads to destruction. And the more understanding we get by the precepts of God, the more rooted will our hatred of sin be; for to depart from evil, that is understanding, Job 28. 28; and the more ready we are in the scriptures, the better furnished we are with answers to temptation. But let us ask ourselves, Have we detected the false ways of our own hearts? Little is done in heart religion till our besetting sins are searched out. And let us not be satisfied with forbearance from outward acts. Let us grieve for every thought of sin that grieves the blessed Comforter. Lord, turn our eyes, our hearts, our feet, our ways, more and more to thy blessed self.—(6.)

J. NUN, 105. The word of God is a lamp and a light; it discovers to us that, concerning God and ourselves, which otherwise we could not have known; it shows us what is amiss, and will be dangerous; it directs us in our work and way, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it; it is a lamp which we may set up by us, and take into our hands for our own particular use, Prov. 6. 23. The commandment is a lamp kept burning with the oil of the Spirit. Observe the use we should make of it; as a light to our feet and to our path, to direct us both in the choice of our way in general, and in the particular steps we take in that way.

The bible is the treasure of the poor, the solace of the sick, and the support of the dying. While other books may amuse and instruct in a leisure hour, it is the peculiar triumph of that book to create

light in the midst of darkness, to alleviate the sorrow which admits no other alleviation, to direct a beam of hope to the heart which no other topic of consolation can reach, while guilt, despair, and death vanish before its holy inspiration. There is something in the spirit and diction of the bible peculiarly adapted to arrest the attention of the plainest and most uncultivated minds.—(38.)

106. God's commands are his judgments, the dictates of infinite wisdom. Observe his willingness—he had sworn and would perform it; his dependence for ability to perform this was fixed upon God's continual help; the keeping which he meant was that of a sinner under a dispensation of mercy, of a believer who is interested in the covenant of grace.

107. He is often afflicted, but it chiefly grieves him that he cannot do the things that he would. His longing desire to become more holy, dictates his daily prayers for quickening grace. He pleads the promise of God, guides his desires by it, and grounds his hopes upon it; Quicken me according to thy word.

108. The spiritual offerings which all Christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God, must be free-will-offerings, for the willing mind is accepted. Teach me thy judgments. We cannot offer anything to God, which we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of; and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us, as for the favour of God towards us.

109. To have our soul or life continually in our hands, is a phrase often used in scripture, and implies going in constant danger of life; yet he did not forget God's promises nor his precepts. St. Paul knew that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him; but none of these things, said he, move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, Acts 20. 23.—(32.)

110. Numberless are the snares which the wicked, in their human wisdom and diabolical malice, have laid for the consciences of those who profess themselves to be the servants of God; and happy is that servant whom they have not caused to err from his Master's precepts.—(32.)

111. The present delight he took in God's testimonies, was an evidence that the good things contained in them were treasures which he set his heart upon. They are a heritage for ever, and that no

earthly heritage is, 1 Pet. 1. 4; all the saints accept them as such, and can therefore be content with little of this world.

112. He resolves thence to take his measures; I have inclined my heart to do thy statutes. We must look for comfort only in the way of duty, and that duty must be done. I have, by the grace of God, inclined my heart to it, and conquered the aversion I had. A good man brings his heart to his work, and then it is done well.

D. SAMECH, 113. Here is a dread of the risings of sin, and the first beginnings of it; I hate vain thoughts. In others he could not discern them, but he hated them in his own heart. Every good man makes conscience of his thoughts, for they are words to God. Vain thoughts not only divert the mind from that which is good, but open the door to all evil, Jer. 4. 14. The more we love the law of God, the more we shall get the mastery of our vain thoughts, and the more watchful we shall be, lest they draw us from that we love.

113. Or, "Divided thoughts"—indecisions in religion: see *Greenfield*.

114. Believers are safe under God's protection. They may by faith retire to him, and repose in him as their Hiding-place, where they are kept. They may by faith oppose his power to all the might and malice of their enemies, as their shield to quench every fiery dart. I hope in thy word, which has acquainted me with thee, and assured me of thy kindness to me.

115. Would we make progress in keeping God's commandments, we must be separated from evil doers, unless we mean to sacrifice conscience to worldly courtesy. Those that would keep God's commandments, must often renew their resolutions to do so.

116. He pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it; Uphold me, according to thy word, which word I hope in. He pleads the great need he had of God's grace, and the great advantage it would be of to him; Uphold me, that I may live; intimating, that he could not live without the grace of God. He should fall into sin, into death, into hell, if God did not hold him up; but, supported by his hand, he shall live; his spiritual life shall be maintained, and be an earnest of eternal life.

117. Hold me up, and I shall be safe;

out of danger, and out of the fear of danger. Our holy security is grounded on Divine supports. In the strength of this grace, I will have respect unto thy statutes continually. I will employ myself, so some; I will delight myself, so others, in thy statutes.

118. All departure from God's statutes is most certainly an error, and will prove a fatal one. Their deceit is falsehood; they deceive themselves by setting up false rules, in opposition to God's statutes, which they err from; and go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good, and their crafty projects of mischief. Their cunning is falsehood. The utmost of their policy is treachery and perfidiousness; this the God of truth hates, and will punish.

118. Their elevation is a lie.—*A. Clarke.*

119. These are the wicked of the earth. In God's account they are worthless things, the scum and refuse of the earth, and no more to be compared with the righteous, than dross with fine gold. There is a day coming which will put them away into everlasting fire, fit place for the dross. I see what comes of sin; therefore I love thy testimonies, which warn me to take heed of those dangerous courses, and keep me from the paths of the destroyer.

120. What we read and hear of the judgments of God should make us fear lest we offend him. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by the terrors of the Lord; especially when judgment begins at the house of God, and hypocrites are discovered, and put away as dross. Surely we who fall so far below the psalmist in devout affections should fear lest a promise being left us of entering into heavenly rest, any of us should be found to come short of it, Heb. 4. 1. ✕

Y. AIN, 121. Happy is the man, who, acting upon gospel principles, doeth judgment and justice to all around him. He will have joy in the testimony of his conscience, and confidence in the mercy and truth of his God, that he will not leave him in the hand of oppressors.

122. As a rich person, by becoming surety for a poor man, rescues him from oppression, so the Lord delivers us from our enemies by undertaking our cause for us. Christ our surety, having paid our debt and ransom, rescues us from merited condemnation, and engages for all the blessings of salvation to every true

believer. The psalmist does not prescribe to God what he should do for him; only let it be for good, in such way and manner as Infinite Wisdom sees best.

123. He looked for help from Heaven; we deceive ourselves if we look for it any other way; but it did not come so soon as he expected, so that he was ready to despair, and to think that, because the salvation did not come when he looked for it, it would never come. It is often the infirmity even of good men, to be weary of waiting God's time. Yet he expects the word of God's righteousness, and no other salvation than what is secured by that word, which cannot fall to the ground, because it is a word of righteousness.

124. The best saints count this their best plea for a blessing, Let me have it according to thy mercy; for we deserve no favour from God, nor can we claim any as a debt; we are most likely to be easy when we cast ourselves upon God's mercy, and refer ourselves to it. Particularly, when we come for instruction, to be taught his statutes, we must beg it as a mercy.

125. The servant has reason to expect, that if he be at a loss about his work, his master should teach him. If any man resolve to do God's will as his servant, he shall be made to know his testimonies, John 7. 17; Ps. 25. 14.

126. It is possible a godly man may sin against the commandment; but a wicked man would sin away the commandment; would repeal God's laws, and enact his own lusts. The psalmist desires that God would appear for the vindication of his own honour; It is time for thee, Lord, to work. Or, It is time to work for thee, O Lord. We must do what we can for the support of religion, and, after all, must beg of God to take the work into his own hands.

126. To send the Messiah, to work righteousness; to fulfil the law, and vindicate the honour of it, broken by men. It was always a notion of the Jews that the Messiah's coming would be at a time of great wickedness on earth, which agrees with the word of God.—*Gill.*

127. Gold, fine gold, is what most men set their hearts upon; they will venture their souls, their God, their all, to get and keep it: but the psalmist saw that the word of God enriches the soul toward God, and therefore he loved it better than gold. It had done that for him which gold could not do, and would stand him in stead when the wealth of the world would fail him. It is hypocrisy

to say we love God's commandments more than much fine gold, unless we value the cause of true religion more than our worldly interests.

128. If we consent to the law, that it is good, we shall delight in it after the inner man. The fruit and evidence of this love was, He hated every false way. The way of sin being directly contrary to God's precepts, which are right, is a false way; and therefore they that have a love and esteem for God's law, hate it, and will not be reconciled to it.

D. Ps. 129. The word of God gives us wonderful discoveries of God, and Christ, and another world; admirable proofs of Divine love and grace. Its majesty, purity, and the harmony of the parts are all wonderful; its effects upon the consciences of men, both for conviction and comfort, are wonderful; and it is a sign that we are not acquainted with God's testimonies, or do not understand them, if we do not admire them. The wonders of redeeming love will fix the heart in the observance and adoration of them.

130. The scriptures are the appointed means of enlightening the mind with true and saving knowledge. They show us what we were, what we are, and what we shall be. They show us what God hath done for us, and what we are to do for him; they show us our enemies, and how we are to encounter them with success. They show us the mercy and the justice of the Lord, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell. Thus they give to the simple in a few days an understanding of these matters which philosophy for whole ages sought in vain.—(32.)

131. As the man who is run out of breath pants for the refreshing breeze, so the believer, wearied with the cares of life and his conflicts with sin, pants for the consolations conveyed to him by means of the sacred word, and stands expecting and longing for them, Ps. 42. 1. To hunger and thirst after righteousness may create uneasiness here; but these desires shall be fully answered when all others are disappointed. When Christ is formed in the soul, there are gracious longings, unaccountable to a stranger to the work.

132. The Lord regards with tender and fatherly mercy those who love his name. If we cannot decide that this is our case, still we may pray, Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou

usest to do unto those that love thy name.

133. The soul must be kept in the bounds prescribed by the word, so as not to transgress, and be carried forward in the paths prescribed by the word, so as not to trifle in them. And therefore we must beg that the Holy Spirit would order our steps accordingly. Let no iniquity have dominion over me, so that I should be led captive by it. The dominion of sin is to be dreaded and deprecated by every one.

134. Where faith has been in constant exercise, and obstacles to conscientious obedience remain unremoved, the soul will pray that the gracious providence of God will open some plainer and more encouraging path for the observance of his statutes. Though the benefit of persecution may be felt, yet the weariness of long-protracted oppression of men is often more than flesh and blood can bear; and He who knoweth our frame, will not refuse to look upon and remove it in answer to the prayers of his people.—(6.)

135. Such cries must have been hopeless, yea, presumptuous, had there not been such an acquaintance with the gospel way of access to God, as led the psalmist joyfully to renounce every other way, and diligently to improve the light afforded for making this acceptable approach to God. Whatever obscurity may appear to hang over the faith of the old testament believers, their confidence at the throne of grace can only be explained, by their having obtained a more distinct perception of gospel privileges, through the representations of their law, than is generally imagined. Do you ask how you shall attain the same heavenly enjoyment? Go to the same place, plead the name and merits of Jesus, and you will not, you cannot plead in vain.—(6.)

136. Commonly, where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping-eye. Christ was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.

Accept, O Lord, the tears our blessed Redeemer shed in the days of his flesh, for us who should weep for our brethren or ourselves; and give us the grace of godly sorrow.—(32.)

Y. TZADDI, 137. It behoves us to submit to the justice of God. This will calm the tempest of the soul. We shall allow

his judgments to be righteous, and be induced to cheerful obedience. Every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it.

138. The scriptures are holy, just, and good, and for instruction in righteousness. All in them is faithful and true. The promises in them are faithfully performed by Him that made them; they are all yea and amen in Christ. In his gospel God hath revealed the complete righteousness of his Son.—(37.)

139. The psalmist's ardent love to the word of God, and zeal for his glory, distressed his mind, while he observed how his enemies forgot and neglected the plainest truths and precepts of the scripture. When our zeal is purified from bitterness and resentment, it resembles that of the Redeemer. Or, My zeal has pressed or constrained me. Zeal against sin should constrain us to do what we can against it, at least to do the more in religion ourselves.

140. Wherever there is grace, there is a warm attachment to the word of God. Our love to the word of God is an evidence of our love to God, when we love it for the sake of its purity, because it is designed to make us partake his holiness.

141. Men's real excellency always makes them low in their own eyes. It has been the common lot of God's people to be a despised people. When we are small and despised, we have the more need to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition.

142. The law of God is the truth, the standard of holiness, and the rule of happiness; but the obedience of Christ alone forms that everlasting righteousness, which is testified to us in scripture, and justifies the believer. If the principles be true, the practice must be agreeable to them.

143. Sorrows are often the lot of saints in this vale of tears; they are in heaviness through manifold temptations. All this trouble and anguish did not diminish his desire for the comforts of the word of God; he could still find that peace and pleasure in them, which all the calamities of this present time could not deprive him of. There are delights, variety of delights in the word of God, which the saints have often the sweetest enjoyment of when they are in trouble and anguish, 2 Cor. 1. 5.

144. We ought to meditate much and often upon the equity and the eternity of the word of God. Those that know much

of the word of God, should still covet to know more; for there is more to be known. Give me this renewed understanding, and then I shall be eternally happy, and shall be comforted, for the present, in the prospect. This is life eternal, to know God, John 17. 3. May the Lord give us understanding, that we may live the life of faith and grace here, and be removed to the life of glory hereafter.

P. КОРН, 145. Supplications with the whole heart differ very widely from that lip labour in which formalists confide; they are presented only by those who desire God's salvation, and who love his commandments, but are sensible they are of themselves unable to keep them.

146. I cried unto thee. Whither should the child go but to his father? His good purposes are used as a humble plea; Save me from my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hinderances in my way, that I may keep thy testimonies.

147. It is a certain sign our hearts are set upon a work, when the thoughts of it cause sleep to depart from us, and we are constant and early in the performance of it. Christians, who enjoy health, should not suffer the sun to shine in vain, nor the golden hours of the morning to glide away unimproved.—(32.)

Hope in God's word encouraged him to continue instant in prayer, though the answer did not come immediately.

148. His mind was full of God; even in the night-watches he would rather meditate and pray, than turn to sleep again. It is better to take time from sleep, than not to find time for prayer. We can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace; for we may have access unto God at all hours.

Mere reading the word will not serve, we must meditate in it. He began the day with God. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God, it will help to keep us in his fear all the day long.

149. What has he to say? It is much in a little; Lord, quicken me; stir me up to that which is good, and make me vigorous and lively, and cheerful in it. Let habits of grace be drawn out into actions. He encourages himself to hope that he shall obtain his request; for he depends upon God's loving kindness. He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me.

150. If we are employed in God's

service, we need not fear, though they draw nigh that follow after mischief, and are far from his law, setting themselves as far as they can out of the reach of its convictions and commands.

151. It is the happiness of the saints, that, when trouble is near, God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and him. He is never far to seek. All thy commandments are truth. The enemies thought to defeat the promises God had made; but they were inviolably true, and would be infallibly performed.

152. The psalmist found that the word of God is what one may venture all upon. This assurance was confirmed by the observations and experiences of his own life, and of others that had gone before him in the ways of God. All that ever trusted in God have found him faithful.

7. *RESH*, 153. God is mindful of his people's afflictions, but he will have us put him in remembrance, Isa. 43. 26. Deliver me, for I do not forget thy law. The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we have of deliverance.

154. Christ is the Advocate of his people, their Redeemer; he is mighty, and thoroughly pleads their cause against the accusations of Satan, the charges of Divine justice, and the condemnation of their own hearts, and delivers them from wicked men. Those who were quickened by his Spirit and grace, when they were dead in trespasses and sins, have often need to be quickened again; to have the work of grace revived in them according to the word of promise.—(27.)

155. The wicked not only do not God's statutes, but they do not so much as seek them. Salvation is far from them. How can they expect God's favour when in adversity, who never sought his statutes when they were in prosperity! But eternal salvation in Christ is certainly far from them. They flatter themselves that they are going to heaven; but they are mistaken, it is far from them; and the longer they persist in sin, the further it is.

156. God's mercies are tender, for he is full of compassion; they are a fountain that can never be exhausted; he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. He begs for God's grace, reviving, quickening grace, according to the new covenant; or, according to his usage with those that love his name.

157. The number, power, and malice of our persecutors should strengthen our steady purpose not to decline from the ways of the Lord. Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies. A man who is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none.

158. It grieved him to see men dishonour God, serve Satan, and ruin their own souls; to see the transgressors so numerous and so industrious to draw unstable souls into their snares. All this cannot but be a grief to those who regard the glory of God, and the welfare of mankind. They that hate sin truly, hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God, and a violation of his word.

159. Happy are those who can appeal to God how cordially they love his law. His grace hath planted this love in their hearts. Our obedience is only pleasing to God, and pleasant to ourselves, when it comes from a principle of love. We need not desire to be quickened further than God's loving kindness will quicken.

160. God's word has never failed any that ventured upon it. It is true from the beginning. The church, from its beginning, was built upon this rock. All, in every age, that have received God's word in faith and love, have found every saying in it faithful and well worthy of all acceptance. It will be found faithful to the end, because righteous; Every one of thy judgments endures for ever unalterable.

7. *SCHIN*, 161. When those in power become persecutors, there are powerful temptations to apostasy or iniquity; but those whose hearts stand in awe of God's word, will rather endure the wrath of man than break the law of God, and will prefer suffering to deliverance by sin.

162. He took pleasure in the word of God. He rejoiced that he had experience of the power of it. It is through much opposition that a soul comes to rejoice in God's word. By the word of God we become unspeakable gainers.

163. Love and hatred are the leading affections of the soul; if those be fixed aright, the rest move accordingly. Every man hates to have a lie told him, but we should more hate telling a lie; by the former we only receive an affront from men, by the latter we give an affront to God. He had a rooted affection to the word of God; Thy law do I love. And therefore he abhorred lying, for lying is contrary to

the whole law of God; and the reason why he loved the law of God was, because of the truth of it. The more we see the beauty of truth, the more we shall see the detestable deformity of a lie.

164. Praising God is a duty we should abound in. We must praise God on all occasions, in every thing give thanks. The subject can never be exhausted, and our affections should never be tired. We must praise God for his precepts, which are all just and good; for his promises and threatenings, and the performance of both in his providence. We are to praise God even for afflictions; through grace we get good by them.

165. They that love the world, have great vexation, for it does not answer their expectation; they that love God's word, have great peace, for it outdoes their expectation. Nothing shall offend them; nothing shall be a snare or stumbling-block to entangle them either in guilt or grief. No event of providence shall be either an invincible temptation or an intolerable affliction to them. Every thing shall work for good to them, and therefore shall please them, and they reconcile themselves to it. They, in whom this holy love reigns, will not perplex themselves with needless scruples, or take offence at their brethren, 1 Cor. 13. 6, 7.

166. The believer hopes for the free salvation of the gospel, and conscientiously obeys the commandments of the law. Observe how God has joined these two together, and let no man put them asunder. A good hope of salvation will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the hope is, the more lively the obedience will be.

167. Our love to the word of God must be a victorious love, such as will subdue and mortify our lusts, and root out carnal affections. His soul kept them; we must make heart work of it, or we make nothing of it. The soul must be sanctified and renewed; it must be employed in glorifying God, for he will be worshipped in the spirit.

168. We must keep both the precepts and the testimonies; the commands of God by our obedience to them, and his promises by our reliance on them. He was governed herein by a good principle. The consideration that God's eye is upon us at all times, should make us very careful to keep his commandments, Gen. 17. 1.

¶ Tau, 169. He is concerned that he might have grace and strength to lift up his prayers; that no guilt might shut them out, and separate between him and God, that God would graciously receive his prayers and take notice of them.

He was not without spiritual understanding, but he desired to know more of himself, more of his wants and weaknesses, to know more of God in Christ, and of Christ, his person, offices, and grace; to know more of the doctrines of the word, and the duties of religion.—(27.)

170. His prayer, that his supplication might come before God, implies a deep sense of unworthiness, and a holy fear that his prayer should come short, as not fit to come before God; nor would any of our prayers have had access to God, if Jesus Christ had not approached to him as an Advocate for us. Lord, give me such an understanding as thou hast promised, and such a deliverance as thou hast promised; I ask for no other. It also encourages his faith and expectation; Lord, that which I pray for, is what thou hast promised.

171. When God opens the understanding, opens the heart, and so opens the lips, it is that the mouth may show forth his praise. We have learned nothing to purpose, if we have not learned to praise God. They that pray for God's grace, must aim at God's glory, Eph. 1. 12.

172. We should always make the word of God the rule of our discourse, so as never to transgress it by sinful speaking, or sinful silence; and we should often make it the subject-matter of our discourse, that it may feed many, and minister grace to the hearers.

173. He finds his own hands are not sufficient, nor can any creature lend him a helping hand to any purpose; therefore he looks up to God in hopes that the hand that had made him, would help him. All our help must be expected from God's hand, from his power and his bounty. He pleads what Divine grace had already wrought in him, as a pledge of further mercy. He had made religion his serious and deliberate choice.

174. I have longed for thy salvation. He was looking further, and longing for something better in another world. There is an eternal salvation which all the saints are longing for, and therefore pray that God would help them forward in their way to it. Thy law is my delight. Those

that are cheerful in their obedience, may in faith beg help of God to carry them on in their obedience.

175. Our souls must be employed in praising God; therefore we must pray for grace and peace, that we may be fitted to praise God. He prays that God would give him strength to praise him; Let thy judgments help me; let all ordinances and all providences (both are God's judgments) further me in glorifying God; let them be the matter of my praise, let them help me for that work.

176. He often looks back with shame and gratitude to his original lost estate, when like a helpless sheep he wandered astray from the fold of God, and was sought out, and brought back by the Good Shepherd. He confesses his manifold wanderings, but he hath not forgotten the commandments of God. He still prays for the tender care of Him who purchased his flock with his own blood, that he may know his voice, follow him, and receive from him the gift of eternal life. Lord, own me for one of thine; send after me by the word, and conscience, and providences; bring me back by thy grace. Seek me, that is, Find me; for God never seeks in vain. Turn me, and I shall be tinned.

Let this psalm be a touchstone by which to try our hearts, and our lives. Let us constantly inquire—Are these gracious tempers and holy exercises of faith, love, hope, humility, patience, and zeal, to be found in our souls? Do our hearts, cleansed in Christ's blood, make these meditations, prayers, resolutions, and confessions our own? Is God's word the sole standard of our faith, and the law of our practice? Is it the channel which conveys fulness of grace and comfort in Christ, to our hearts? Is it the instructor, the counsellor, the quickener, the medicine, the armour, the treasury, the wealth, the support, the guard, the joy, the all of our souls? Do we receive it as words from God to us? Do we use it as pleas with him for whatever we need? Happy are those who live in such delightful exercises.—(10.)

We must not pass one extraordinary perfection in this psalm! Begin where you will, you seem to be at the commencement; end where you will, you close with a complete sense. And yet it is not formed of detached sentences: it is a whole, composed of many parts; all apparently as necessary to the perfection of the psalm,

as the different alphabetical letters, under which it is arranged, are to the formation of a complete alphabet. Though there be a continual recurrence of the same words, which would, of itself, prevent it from having a pleasing effect upon the ear; yet these words are connected with a vast variety of others, which show their force and meaning in still new and impressive points of light, so that attention is still excited, and devotion kept alive. Every where it shows the glories of the God who has revealed his will to man in the scriptures, the necessities and dependence of His intelligent creatures, the bounty of the Creator, and the praise and obedience which are His due. To no psalm can its own words be better applied, ver. 18, Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.—*A. Clarke.*

PSALM CXX.

The psalmist complains of his being driven out of the congregation of the Lord, and his being forced among barbarous people. (1.) He prays to God to deliver him from the mischief designed him by false and malicious tongues, ver. 1, 2. He declares the judgments of God against such, ver. 3, 4. (2.) He complains of his wicked neighbours, ver. 5—7.

SONGS OF DEGREES.—Fifteen psalms, 120 to 134, are entitled Shir-Hammachaloth, literally, Songs of the steps, or, as Lowth terms them, Odes of ascension. They are supposed to have derived this name from being sung when the people came up, either to worship at Jerusalem, at the annual festivals, or perhaps from the Babylonish captivity. Ezra 7. 9, the return from captivity is called the ascension, or coming up from Babylon. Ps. 126 favours this idea, but as some of these odes were composed before the captivity, the title may refer to either of these occasions, when the Jews went up to Jerusalem, which stood on a steep rocky ascent, in large companies, and perhaps sung these psalms by the way.—*T. H. Horne.* Others think the title had reference to the musical notes to which they were sung, or that they were sung on solemn occasions on the fifteen steps which led from the outer court of the temple to the inner.

Ver. 1—4. Here is deliverance from a false tongue, obtained by prayer. The psalmist records his own experience of this. He was brought into great distress, by lying lips, and a deceitful tongue. The most dangerous enemies are such as carry on malicious designs under the colour of friendship. May every good man be delivered from such lying lips. They forged false accusations against him. In this distress, he sought God by fervent prayer. He appealed to Him who has all men's hearts in his hand, who has power over the consciences of bad men, and can, when he pleases, bridle their tongues. He obtained a gracious answer to this

prayer. The God of truth is the Protector of his people from lying lips.

The doom of a false tongue is here foretold by faith. The threatening is addressed to the sinner himself, ver. 3. Surely sinners durst not do as they do, if they knew, and would be persuaded to think, what will be in the end thereof. Let liars consider what shall be given to them; Sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper; they will fall, and lie for ever under the wrath of God, and will be made miserable by the tokens of his displeasure, which will fly swiftly like arrows, and will strike the sinner ere he is aware, and when he sees not who hurts him. This is threatened against liars, 64. 7. God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded. They set God at a distance from them, but from afar his arrows can reach them. They are sharp arrows, and arrows of the mighty, the Almighty; for they will pierce through the strongest armour, and strike deep into the hardest heart. The terrors of the Lord are his arrows, Job 6. 4, and his wrath is compared to burning coals of juniper, which have a vehement heat, and keep fire very long. This is the portion of the false tongue; for all that love and make a lie, shall have their portion in the lake that burns eternally, Rev. 22. 15.

4. "Rethamim," the genista or broom which abounds in Arabia, and is said to sparkle, burn, and crackle more vehemently than other wood.

Ver. 5—7. The psalmist complains of the neighbourhood into which he was driven. He was forced to live among wicked people. It is a very grievous burden to a good man, to be cast into, and kept in the company of those whom he hopes to be for ever separated from. See here the character of a good man, I am for peace; for living peaceably with all men. The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable. He spake with all the respect and kindness that could be; but they would not hear him patiently, they were fierce and implacable, and bent to mischief. Such were Christ's enemies.

While we look not only to David, but to Jesus, the Prince of peace, and see him surrounded by lying lips and deceitful tongues—while we consider how long the holy Saviour tarried in this wicked world—while we attend to his life and the great object of his coming into the world,

to make and to give peace, by the blood of his cross, and view him hated and persecuted to death we cannot marvel if the world hate us too. We shall not court their friendship who would wage war with the Son of God himself if he were upon earth, nor shall we murmur though for a time obliged to dwell amid the contentious and malicious. But let us follow David as he prefigured Christ; in our distress let us cry unto the Lord; and he will hear us. Let us possess our souls in patience, and follow after peace and holiness, striving to overcome evil with good, and in meekness warning those around us of their danger.

5. Mesech probably denotes barbarous tribes to the north of Palestine, as Kedar those to the south. Some interpret Mesech not as a proper name, but as a long space of time.

PSALM CXXI.

The psalmist here introduces a person, most probably an Israelite on his way to Jerusalem, expressing his trust and confidence in the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, ver. 1, 2, of whose favour and protection, at all times and in all dangers, he assures him, ver. 3—8.—(32.)

This psalm teaches us to stay ourselves upon God as a God all-sufficient for us. We must not rely upon creatures, upon men and means, instruments and second causes, nor make flesh our arm. "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?" so some read it. Does my help come from thence? Shall I depend upon the powers of the earth; upon the strength of the hills; upon princes and great men? No; my confidence is in God only. "We must lift up our eyes above the hills," so others; we must look beyond instruments to God, who makes them that to us, which they are.

We must see all our help laid up in God, in his power and goodness, his providence and grace; and from him we must expect it to come. The help I desire, is what he sends; from him I expect it in his own way and time. We must bring help from God, by faith in his promises, and a due regard to all his institutions. I will lift up mine eyes to the hills; perhaps the hills on which the temple was built, mount Moriah, and the holy hill of Zion; I will have an eye to the special presence of God in his church, and with his people, his presence by promise, and

not only to his common presence. When at a distance, he would look toward the sanctuary, 28. 2; 42. 6; from thence cometh our help, from the word and prayer, from the secret of his tabernacle. We must encourage our confidence in God with this. He that made heaven and earth, is sovereign Lord of both, and can make use of them as he pleases for the help of his people, and restrain them when he pleases from hurting his people.

This psalm also teaches us to comfort ourselves in God, when our difficulties and dangers are greatest. It is here promised, that if we put our trust in God, and keep in the way of our duty, we shall be safe under his protection, so that no real evil shall happen to us, nor any affliction, but what God sees good for us, and will do us good by. The Lord is thy Keeper, ver. 5. It is infinite Wisdom that contrives, and infinite Power that works the safety of those that have put themselves under God's protection.

He who is Protector of the church in general engages to preserve every particular believer with the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. He that keepeth Israel is thy Keeper. The Shepherd of the flock is the Shepherd of every sheep, and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish. He is a wakeful, watchful Keeper; he is never weary; he not only does not sleep, but he does not so much as slumber.

He not only protects those whom he is the Keeper of, but he refreshes them; He is their Shade. The comparison has a great deal of gracious condescension in it; the eternal Being, that he may speak sensible comfort to his people, promises to be their shadow, and to shelter them from the scorching heat, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, Isa. 32. 2. Under this shadow they may sit with delight and assurance, Cant. 2. 3. He is always near to his people for their protection and refreshment; he is on their right hand, so that he is never far to seek. The right hand is the working hand; let them but turn themselves to their duty, and they shall find God ready to assist and give them success, 16. 8.

He is not only at their right hand, but he will also keep the feet of his saints, 1 Sam. 2. 9; he will not suffer thy foot to be moved. God will provide that his people shall not fall, though there are many endeavouring to undermine them

by fraud, or overthrow them by force. The sun shall not smite thee, with his heat, by day, nor the moon, with her cold and moisture, by night, ver. 6. The sun and moon are great blessings to mankind, and yet, such a sad change has sin made in the creation, even the sun and moon are often instruments of hurt and distemper to human bodies. It may be understood figuratively; Thou shalt not be hurt either by the open assaults, or by the secret attempts of thine enemies.

His protection will make them safe in every respect; The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, the evil of sin, and the evil of trouble. He shall prevent the evil thou fearest, and shall sanctify, remove, or lighten the evil thou feelest. He will keep thee from doing evil, 2 Cor. 13. 7, and so far from suffering evil, that whatever affliction happens to thee, there shall be no evil in it. Even that which kills, shall not hurt.

It is the spiritual life, especially, that God will take under his protection; He shall preserve thy soul. He will with peculiar care preserve them, that they be not defiled by sin, and disturbed by affliction, he will preserve them from perishing eternally. He will keep us in all our ways. Thou shalt be under his protection in all thy journies and voyages, as he kept Israel in the wilderness, in their removes and rests. He will prosper thee in all thy affairs. He will keep thee in life and death; going out to thy labour in the morning of thy days, and coming home to thy rest when the evening of old age calls thee in.

He will continue his care from this time forth, and even for evermore. It is a protection for life. He will be thy Guide even unto death. He will preserve thee in his heavenly kingdom. God will protect his church and his saints always, even to the end of the world. The Spirit, who is their Preserver and Comforter, shall abide with them for ever.

During the believer's wearisome pilgrimage and perilous warfare, he should look constantly to Him who bled on mount Calvary, and now reigns on the holy hill of Zion; in whom we have righteousness and strength; through whom we have access to the mercy-seat, and to Jehovah as our Father, by whom believers shall, ere long, be received into everlasting mansions. Let us then be earnest and serious in inquiring whether we

belong to this holy nation, this peculiar people. If this be our case, we may dismiss our anxious cares and fears, being careful to use the appointed means, and to be found in our proper work, assured that the blessings promised in this psalm are ours.

6. The effects of the powerful rays of the sun, in the east, are often fatal to those who incautiously expose themselves thereto, 2 Kings 4. 19. It also appears that sleeping in the moonbeams by night is injurious. Several modern travellers have mentioned instances of this falling under their own observation. *Carné* states that the effects of the moon on the sight of those who sleep with their faces exposed to it are more injurious than those of the sun. The *Baptist* missionaries say, "He who has slept in the moonlight is heavy when he wakes, and as if deprived of his senses, and as it were oppressed by the weight of the dampness which is spread over his whole body."

PSALM CXXII.

This psalm seems to have been penned for the use of the people of Israel, when they came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the solemn feasts. Observe (1.) The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem, ver. 3—5. (2.) The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare, ver. 6—9. Let this psalm direct us to the gospel church, the Jerusalem that is from above.

Ver. 1—5. The servants of God should exhort others, and should be glad to be exhorted themselves, to attend Divine ordinances. The pleasure and profit to be derived from these means of grace, will make them disregard inconvenience and fatigue in resorting to them.

We are slow and backward, and others are so too, and therefore we should thus quicken and excite one another to that which is good. They that rejoice in God, will rejoice in calls and opportunities to wait upon him. We should desire our christian friends, when they have any good work in hand, to call for us, and take us along with them. Those who came out of the country to the solemn festivals, when they found the journey tedious, comforted themselves that they should be in Jerusalem shortly, and that would make amends for all their fatigues.

With what alacrity should we think of the heavenly Jerusalem! How cheerfully should we bear the cross and wel-

come the stroke of death in hopes of an immortal crown of glory! Jerusalem is called the beautiful city, not only for situation, but for building. It is built uniform, compact together, the houses strengthening and supporting one another. It was a type of the gospel church, which is compact together in holy love and christian communion, so that it is all as one city.

Union and harmony are the ornaments and the stability of the church on earth; and if all the disciples of Christ were of one mind, and kept the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, their enemies would be deprived of their chief advantage against them. And if they were more attentive to the commands of the Son of David, they would be more like the tribes of the Lord when they went up to the testimony of Israel—the ark and the mercy-seat—to give thanks to the name of the Lord. See from hence we go to public worship, to give thanks. But Satan's maxim always has been, to divide that he may conquer; and few christians are sufficiently aware of his designs.

Ver. 6—9. Those who can do nothing else for the peace of Jerusalem, may pray for it, which is the appointed way of fetching in mercy. We are here encouraged to pray for Jerusalem's peace: They shall prosper that love thee. At least their souls shall prosper by the ordinances they so dearly love. Let all who love true religion pray for the peace, in order to the prosperity of the church. Let us consider all who bear the image and seek the glory of the Redeemer, as our brethren and fellow-travellers, without regarding differences and distinctions which are not essential. Our concern for the public welfare is right, when it is the effect of a sincere love to God's institutions, and his faithful worshippers.

Blessed Spirit of peace and love, who didst reside in the soul of the holy Jesus, descend into his mystical body, and fill those who compose it with his heavenly tempers. Put an end to heresies, heal all schisms, cause bitter contentions to cease, abolish every enmity, and make us to be of one mind; that peace being within her walls, her citizens may give themselves to every profitable employment, and that plenteousness of grace, wisdom, and truth, as well as of earthly blessings, may be within her palaces. Thus will she become a lively portraiture of the place prepared

for them that love one another, where, with one heart and one voice, they shall ascribe salvation and glory to God, and to the Lamb.—(32.)

Love of the brethren and love to God, are motives ever in force, and ought to operate powerfully upon our hearts, to stir us up to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ in fervent prayer and unwearied labour, for the salvation of men, and the Divine glory.—(32.)

PSALM CXXIII.

This psalm was penned at a time when the church of God was brought low, and insulted over by the proud. Here is their expectation of mercy from God, ver. 1, 2. Their plea for mercy with God, ver. 3, 4.

We have here the solemn profession which God's people make of faith and hope in God, ver. 1, 2. Our Lord Jesus has taught us, in prayer, to look unto God, as our Father in heaven; there especially he manifests his glory, as the King in his court. He that dwells there, thence beholds all the calamities of his people, and from thence can send to save them. The eyes of a good man are ever toward the Lord; in every prayer he lifts up his soul to God; especially in trouble, which was the case here. We desire mercy from him, we hope he will show us mercy, and we will continue our attendance on him till it come.

This is illustrated by a similitude; Our eyes are to God, as the eyes of a servant, or handmaid, to the hand of their master and mistress. The eyes of a servant are, 1. to his master's directing hand, expecting that he will appoint him his work. 2. To his supplying hand. Servants look to their master or their mistress, for their portion of meat in due season, Prov. 31. 15. And to God must we look for daily bread, for grace sufficient; from him we must receive it thankfully. Where must we look for help but to our Master? 3. To his protecting hand. If the servant meet with opposition in his work, if he be wronged and injured, who should bear him out and right him, but his master? The people of God, when they are persecuted, may appeal to their Master, We are thine, save us. 4. To his correcting hand. The people of God were now under his rebukes; and whither should they turn but to him that smote them? Isa. 9. 13. They submit themselves to, and humble

themselves under God's mighty hand. 5. And to his rewarding hand. Hypocrites have their eye to the world's hand, thence they have their reward, Matt. 6. 2; but true christians have their eyes to God as their Master and their Rewarder.

Observe God's people in their calamitous condition. They sue for mercy; not prescribing to God what he shall do for them, nor pleading any merit of their own. We find little mercy with men, but this is our comfort, that with the Lord there is mercy; and we need desire no more to relieve us, and make us easy, than the mercy of God.

They set forth their grievances. Reproach is the wound, the burden they complain of. Scorning and contempt have been, are, and are likely to be the lot of God's people in this world. In reference to the scorn and contempt of men, it is matter of comfort to God's people, that there is mercy with God; mercy to their good names, when they are barbarously used.

If we are become the servants of Christ, if we rely on his mercy, observe his directions, and expect our recompense from him, not from man, we may also confidently look to him to provide for, comfort, and defend us. Contempt is hard to bear, but the servants of God should not complain if they are treated as his beloved Son was. Let us then, when ready to faint under trials, look unto Jesus, and by faith and prayer cast ourselves upon the mercy of God.

2 It should be remembered that in the east servants are usually slaves; and though treated in general with kindness and humanity, yet they are dependent upon their masters and mistresses in a manner and to an extent of which others can form but a faint idea. In their attendance they are also almost wholly directed by signs, and orders are conveyed to them by motions often imperceptible to a stranger; which require constant attention on their parts, and close observance of the hands of their superiors. Punishments are also frequently directed by signs, both as to their infliction and termination. In this view of the passage *Harmer* observes, "As a slave, ordered by a master or mistress to be chastised for a fault, turns his or her imploring eyes to that superior, till the motion of the hand appears which puts an end to the bitterness that is felt; so our eyes are put up to thee our God, till thy hand shall give the signal for putting an end to our sorrows: for our enemies, O Lord, we are sensible, are only executing thy orders, and chastening us according to thy pleasure."

PSALM CXXIV.

(1.) The psalmist magnifies the greatness of the danger they were in, and of

the ruin they were at the brink of, ver. 1—5. (2.) He gives God the glory of their escape, ver. 6, 7. He takes encouragement from thence to trust in God, ver. 8. Besides the application of it to any particular deliverance wrought in our days, and the days of our fathers, we should have in our thoughts the great work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, by which we were rescued from the powers of darkness.

Ver. 1—5. The people of God, being here called upon to praise Him for their deliverance, are to take notice whence the threatening danger came; Men rose up against us. How far it went, and how fatal it had been if it had gone a little further. The waters had overwhelmed us; the stream had gone over our souls, our lives, our comforts; all that is dear to us. God suffers the enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his own power may appear the more illustrious in their deliverance.

See the goodness of God, by which they were rescued from the very brink of ruin. God took their part, and appeared for them; he was their helper, and a very present help, a help on their side, nigh at hand. That God was Jehovah; there the emphasis lies. If it had not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, who undertook deliverance, our enemies had overpowered us. Happy the people therefore, whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient.

Ver. 6—8. Their hearts should be the more enlarged in thankfulness to him. God is the author of all our deliverances, and therefore he must have the glory of them. The enemies lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed; God's people are taken in the snare, and are unable to help themselves; but then is God's time to appear for their relief, when all other friends fail.

Their hearts, and the hearts of others, might therefore be more encouraged to trust in God in the like dangers. It is a comfort to all that lay the interests of God's Israel near their hearts, that Israel's God is the same that made the world, and therefore will have a church in the world, and he can secure that church in times of the greatest danger and distress. In

him let us put confidence, and we shall not be put to confusion.

The believer, recollecting his perilous situation before his conversion, the surprising manner in which he has been rescued, the manifold dangers from which he has escaped, and the difficulties from which he has been delivered, notwithstanding his own ignorance, folly, and weakness, will readily ascribe all the honour of his salvation to the power, mercy, and truth of God. And ere long, being finally delivered from troubles and dangers, he will look back with admiring gratitude on the way in which the Lord hath led him. Let us now begin to praise him for the past, if Satan's snare be broken and we are delivered, and let us rejoice that our help for the time to come is in the Lord who made heaven and earth.

PSALM CXXV.

Here is a declaration of the security and privileges of the righteous, ver. 1—3. Prayer offered for them, ver. 4, and the ruin of the wicked foretold, ver. 5.

Here are some very precious promises made to the people of God, which, though designed to secure the welfare of the church in general, may be applied by particular believers to themselves, as other promises of this nature may. The closer our expectations are confined to God, the higher our expectations from him may be raised.

The promises are, that their hearts shall be established by faith: all those minds shall be truly stayed, that are stayed on God; They shall be as mount Zion. The church in general is called mount Zion, Heb. 12. 22; and it shall in this respect be like mount Zion, it shall be built upon a rock, and its interests so well secured, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Particular persons, who trust in God, shall be established, Ps. 112. 7. They shall be as mount Zion, firm as it is, a mountain supported by providence, much more as a holy mountain supported by promise. They cannot be removed from their confidence in God. They abide for ever in that grace which is the earnest of their everlasting continuance in glory.

Committing themselves to God, they shall be safe from all their enemies. As Jerusalem had a natural fortification in

the mountains that were round about it, and which made it very difficult of access for an enemy, such a defence is God's providence to his people! Observe, The Lord is round about his people on every side; there is no gap in the protection which he makes round about his people; the enemy, who goes about them, seeking to do them a mischief, cannot find entrance, Job 1. 10. The continuance of it is from henceforth even for ever. Mountains may moulder and come to naught, and rocks be removed out of their place, Job 14. 18, but God's covenant with his people cannot be broken, Isa. 54. 10, nor his care of them cease. The promises of the stability and security of God's people, will have their full accomplishment in the everlasting state.

Their troubles shall last no longer than their strength will bear them up under them, ver. 3. The rod of the wicked may come, may fall, upon the lot of the righteous. It may fall upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families, their names, any thing that falls to their lot; only it cannot reach their souls. It is promised, that though it may come upon their lot, it shall not rest there. The Lord will proportion their strength to their trials, and make all work together for their good. The enmity and power of the wicked shall only prove a correcting rod, not a destroying sword; even this rod shall not remain upon them, lest they faint under the chastisement. There is danger lest, being long persecuted for their religion, at length they grow weary of it, and willing to give it up; begin to distrust the promise, and to think of casting God off, upon suspicion of his having cast them off: see 73. 13, 14.

The import of this verse 3, seems to be the same with that of our Lord's prediction concerning the troubles of the latter days, Matt. 24. 21, 22. Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. But for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.—(32.)

Ver. 4, 5. Here is the prayer of the psalmist. This teaches us to pray for all good people, to make supplication for all saints. God's promises should quicken our prayers. It is comfortable to wish well to those for whom God has engaged to do well.

He does not pray for the ruin of hypocrites, but he predicts it. The way of holiness is straight; there are no wind-

ings or shiftings in it; it is a uniform course of piety, integrity, sincerity, and kindness. But the ways of sinners are crooked. They shift from one purpose to another, and turn hither and thither to deceive. They wind about to conceal their base intentions, to accomplish their iniquitous projects, or to escape punishment for their crimes; but disappointment, confusion, and misery assuredly shall befall them.

Peace shall be upon Israel. When those who have deserted the ways of God, meet with destruction, those who adhere to them, though they may have trouble in their way, their end shall be peace. Not only the prayers of their brethren, but the intercession of their Saviour, secure to them the upholding power and preserving grace of their God. Peace shall be upon every Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. Lord, number us with them, in time, and to eternity.

2. Jerusalem is seated on a rocky mountain, every way to be ascended, except a little on the north, with steep ascents, and valleys naturally fortified. For the most part it is environed with other mountains, not far removed, as if placed in the midst of an amphitheatre.

PSALM CXXVI.

This psalm was penned with reference to some great and surprising deliverance of the people of God out of bondage and distress, most likely their return out of Babylon in Ezra's time. Their captivity there was the most remarkable captivity, both in itself, and as their return out of it was typical of our redemption by Christ. (1.) Those that were returned out of captivity, are here called upon to be thankful, ver. 1—3. (2.) Those that were yet remaining in captivity, are here prayed for, ver. 4, and encouraged, ver. 5, 6.

Ver. 1—3. Here is the deliverance God had wrought; He turned again the captivity of Zion. It is possible that Zion may be in captivity, for the punishment of her degeneracy; but her captivity shall be turned again, when the end is answered, and the work designed by it is effected. The Lord's hand should be acknowledged in all our mercies, whoever is the instrument of them. They were amazed, the mercy came so suddenly; the surprise of it put them in a transport of joy. The heathen took notice of it, they had observed their calamity, and had

triumphed in it, Jer. 22. 8, 9; Ps. 137. 7. Now they could not but observe their deliverance, and admire that. They were but spectators, they had no part or lot in the matter; but the people of God spake of it as sharers in it. Observe here, God's appearances for his people are to be looked upon as great things. God is to be regarded as the Author of all the great things done for the church. It is good to observe how the church's deliverances are for us, that we may rejoice in them.

If unexpected deliverance from outward captivity be so rejoiced in; how ought redemption from the wrath to come, from the power of sin and of Satan, to be valued! The trembling sinner, deeply convinced of his guilt and danger, who has long waited for peace and liberty, when by looking to a crucified Saviour he receives peace to his conscience, and power to break off his sins, often can scarcely believe the prospect which opens to him is a reality.

Ver. 4—6. We have here a prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance, ver. 4. Let those that are returned to their own land, be eased of the burdens they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon, have their hearts stirred up to take the benefit of the liberty granted. The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the completion of it. And while we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even then when we are most furnished with matter for praise. As the torrents in the southern deserts dry up in the summer, but after the season of rains they return again, so the returned Jews prayed that their brethren might be brought back to replenish the land which had so long lain desolate.

Here is a promise, for their encouragement to wait for it, assuring them that though they had now a sorrowful time, yet it would end well. Suffering saints are in tears often, they share in the calamities of human life, and commonly have a greater share in them than others. But they sow in tears; they do the duty of an afflicted state, and so answer the intentions of the providences they are under. Weeping must not hinder sowing; we must improve times of affliction, as disposing us to repentance, and prayer, and humiliation. There are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow;

tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others; tears of sympathy with the afflicted church; and tears of tenderness; in prayer and under the word. These are precious seed, such as the husbandman sows when he has but little corn for his family, and therefore weeps to part with it, yet buries it under ground, in expectation of receiving it again with advantage. Thus does a good man sow in tears.

They shall have a harvest of joy. The troubles of the saints will not last always. The captives in Babylon were long sowing in tears, but at length they were brought forth with joy. They that sow in the tears of godly sorrow, shall reap in the joy of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. Those that sow to the Spirit, in this vale of tears, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, and that will be a joyful harvest indeed. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be for ever comforted. When we mourn for our sins, or suffer for Christ's sake, we are sowing in tears to reap in joy.

Here, O disciple of Jesus, behold an emblem of thy present labour, and future reward. Thou sowest, perhaps in tears; thou doest thy duty amidst persecution, affliction, sickness, pain, and sorrow; thou labourest in the church, and no account is made of thy labours, yet the day is coming when thou shalt reap in joy, plentiful shall be thy harvest, and great shall be thy joy.—(4.)

But let sinners recollect how dreadful their case will be if they have their all in this world, and nothing hereafter but weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. And let us all remember that God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap, Gal. 6. 7—9.

PSALM CXXVII.

This psalm teaches us constantly to depend on God in every undertaking, whether public or private.

We are here taught to have continual regard to the Divine Providence in all the concerns of this life. In all the affairs and business of a family we must depend upon God's blessing, and not our own contrivance.

1. For the raising of a family; Except the Lord build the house, by his providence and blessing, they labour in vain, though ever so ingenious, that build it,

Except the Lord bless a building, it is to no purpose for men to build, any more than for the builders of Babel, who attempted it in defiance of Heaven; or Hiel, who built Jericho under a curse. If the design be laid in pride and vanity, or if the foundations be laid in oppression and injustice, Hab. 2. 11, 12, God certainly does not build there. If God be not acknowledged, we have no reason to expect his blessing, and without his blessing all is nothing. Or rather, it is to be understood of the making of a family considerable; men labour to do this by advantageous marriages, offices, employments, purchases; but all in vain, unless God build up the family. The best-laid project fails, unless God crown it with success: see Mal. 1. 4.

2. For the security of a family or a city. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen, though they neither slumber nor sleep, wake but in vain; for a raging fire may break out, in the mischief of which even early discoveries may not be able to prevent. The guard may be slain, or the city betrayed and lost, by means which the most watchful sentinel, or most cautious governor, could not obviate.

3. For the enriching of a family. That is a work which cannot be effected without the favour of Providence. There are some so eager upon the world, that they will both rob their sleep to pay their cares, and have as little comfort in their meals as in their rest; they eat the bread of sorrows. It is part of our sentence, that we eat our bread in the sweat of our face; but these go further, all their days they eat in darkness, Eccl. 5. 17. They are continually full of care, which embitters their comforts, and makes their lives a burden to them. All this is to get money! but all in vain except God prosper them; while they that love God, and are beloved of him, have their minds easy, and live very comfortably. Seeking first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, using moderate diligence in their lawful callings, and casting all their care upon God, they would have needful success, without uneasiness or vexation. The peace and the provision which he giveth to his beloved, are far preferable to the greater prosperity of the wicked. All undue, excessive care about the things of this world, is vain and fruitless; we weary ourselves for vanity, if we have it, and often weary ourselves in vain for it, Hag. 1. 6, 9. God

gives us sleep, as he gives it to his beloved, when with it he gives us grace to lie down in his fear, our souls returning to him and reposing in him as our rest; and when we awake, to be still with him, and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in his service. He gives his beloved sleep, quietness and contentment of mind, a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable expectation of what is to come. Our care must be to keep ourselves in the love of God, and then we may be easy, whether we have little or much of this world.

We should use diligently the proper means, and then expect God's blessing, that we may trust in him without presumption. Thus the minister in watching for souls, the christian seeking to grow in grace and to guard against temptation, and the sinner in coming to the Saviour, should use all appointed means, with perseverance, and yet rely on the Lord alone to render them effectual.

In the increase of the family; he shows,

1. That children are God's gifts, ver. 3. If children are withheld, it is God that withholds them, Gen. 30. 2; if they are given, it is God that gives them, Gen. 33. 5; and they are to us what he makes them, comforts or crosses. Children are a heritage, and a reward; and are so to be accounted blessings, and not burdens; for he that sends mouths, will send meat, if we trust in him.

2. That they are a good gift, and a great support and defence to a family. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, who knows how to use them for his own safety and advantage, so are the children of youth. Or, children who are themselves young, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory, and the service of their generation; but afterward, when they are gone abroad into the world, they are arrows out of the hand, it is too late to bend them then. But these arrows in the hand too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to godly parents, whose grey hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave. Though, if trained according to God's word, they generally prove the best defence in declining years, remembering their obligations to their parents, and studying to requite them in their old age. Yet all earthly comforts are uncertain, but the Lord will assuredly comfort and bless those who trust in and serve him; and

those who seek the conversion of sinners will find their spiritual children are their joy and crown in the day of Jesus Christ.

5. *Merrick* mentions a Chinese proverb, "When a son is born into a family, a bow and arrow are hung before the gate." The gates are the places where courts of law and justice are held in the east. ✓

PSALM CXXVIII.

This, as the former, is a psalm for families. In that, we were taught that the prosperity of our families depends upon the blessing of God; in this, we are taught that the only way to obtain that blessing which will make our families comfortable, is, to live in the fear of God, and in obedience to him.

It is here showed that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. It is laid down as an undoubted truth, that those who are truly holy, are truly happy. Those whose blessed state we are here assured of, are such as fear the Lord, and walk in his ways; such as have a deep reverence of God, and evidence it by constant conformity to his will. Where the fear of God is a commanding principle in the heart, the conversation will be accordingly; and in vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God, if we do not make conscience both of keeping to his ways, and not trifling in them, or drawing back. Such are blessed, ver. 1, and shall be blessed, ver. 4. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and for ever.

Blessed is every one that fears the Lord, whoever he be; in every nation, he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted of him, and therefore is blessed. Whether he be high or low, rich or poor, in the world, if religion rule him, it will protect and enrich him. Thus shall the man be blessed; not only the nation, the church, but the particular person, in his private interests. We are here encouraged to apply this to ourselves; Happy shalt thou be; thou mayest take the comfort of the promise, and expect the benefit of it, as if it were directed to thee by name, if thou fear God, and walk in his ways. It shall be well with thee; whatever befalls thee, good shall be brought out of it; all shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all to eternity. It is set forth, ver. 4, Behold, thus shall the man be blessed; be-

hold this by faith in the promise; behold this by observation in the performance of the promise; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful; and with admiration it should be so, for we merit no favour, no blessing from him.

Particular promises are here made to godly people, which they may depend upon, as far as is for God's glory and their good. By the blessing of God, they shall get an honest livelihood. It is not promised that they shall live at ease without care or pains, but, Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands. Here is a double promise, that they shall have something to do, for an idle life is a miserable uncomfortable life, and shall have health and strength, and capacity of mind to do it; they shall not be forced to be beholden to others for necessary food, and to live upon the labours of other people. It is as much a mercy as a duty, with quietness to work and eat our own bread, 2 Thess. 3. 12. They shall succeed in their employments; they and theirs shall enjoy what they get. God's blessing will make a little go a great way. It is very pleasant to enjoy the fruits of our own industry. Such as fear God and walk in his ways, are the only happy persons, whatever their station in life may be. Nor will their happiness be diminished if they labour hard for the subsistence of themselves and families. Religion, while it teaches the duties of every relation in life, best insures the comfort of each.

They shall have abundant comfort in their family relations. As a wife and children are very much a man's care, so, if by the grace of God they are such as they should be, they are very much a man's delight. The wife shall be as a vine by the sides of the house. The vine is a weak and tender plant, and needs to be supported and cherished, but it is a very valuable plant. The wife's place is the husband's house. An obedient wife is as the vine, which is pliable, and grows as it is directed. She shall be fruitful as the vine, not only in children, but in the fruits of wisdom and righteousness and good management, the branches of which run over the wall, Gen. 49. 22; Ps. 80. 11. Like a fruitful vine, not cumbering the ground, or bringing forth sour grapes, but good fruit. The children shall be as olive-plants, likely in time to be olive trees; though wild by nature, yet grafted into the good olive, partaking of its root and

fatness, Rom. 11. 17. Parents love to have their children at table, to keep up the pleasantness of the table-talk; to have them in health, craving food, and not physis; to have them like olive-plants, straight and green, prospering in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.

They shall have those good things which God has promised, and which they pray for. Blessings out of Zion are the best blessings, which flow, not from common providence, but from special grace, Ps. 20. 2. They shall live long to enjoy the comforts of the rising generation. They shall see the welfare of God's church, and of the land of their nativity, which every man who fears God is concerned for. A good man can have little comfort in seeing his children's children, unless he see peace upon Israel, and have hopes of transmitting religion, pure and entire, to those who shall come after him, for that is the best inheritance.

Every true Israelite rejoices in the prosperity of Zion. Hereafter we shall see greater things. Jehovah from the heavenly Zion will bless us with the sight of his immortal glory. We shall see the good of the New Jerusalem; the wealth, beauty, and majesty of that holy city. We shall see the generations of the faithful walking in the light of it; with the everlasting peace and rest that remain for the Israel of God. These are the blessings promised to Messiah, and to his seed, for evermore.—(32.)

3. *Russel* describes the houses in the east as often consisting of rooms built round a court where the family continually assemble, and which is planted with shrubs, while vines are trained against the side walls and over the stairs leading to the upper rooms.

PSALM CXXIX.

This psalm relates to the public concerns of God's Israel. (1.) They look back with thankfulness for the former deliverances God had wrought for them and their fathers, out of the many distresses they had been in from time to time, ver. 1—4. (2.) They look forward with a believing prayer for, and prospect of the destruction of all the enemies of Zion, ver. 5—8.

Ver. 1—4. The church of God, in its several ages, is here spoken of. God's people have always had many enemies, and the state of the church, from its in-

fancy, has frequently been an afflicted state. Israel's youth was in Egypt, or in the times of the judges; then they were afflicted, and from thenceforward more or less. The gospel church, ever since it had a being, has been at times afflicted; and it bare this yoke most of all in its youth; witness the persecutions which the primitive church groaned under. The enemies of God's people have used them very barbarously. They tore them as the husbandman tears the ground with his ploughshare, to pull them to pieces, and so to wear out the saints of the Most High. When God permitted them to plough thus, he intended it for his people's good, that, their fallow ground being thus broken up, he might sow the seeds of his grace upon them, and reap a harvest of good fruit from them: howbeit, the enemies meant not so, neither did their hearts think so. The saints have often had trials of cruel scourgings, probably the captives had, and cruel mockings; and it was fulfilled in Christ, who gave his back to the smiters, Isa. 50. 6. Or, it may refer to the desolations they made of the cities of Israel; Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field, Mic. 3. 12. But the church has been always graciously delivered. They have not prevailed against me, ver. 2. This ship has lived at sea, when all the waves and billows have gone over it. Christ has built his church upon a rock; the gates of hell have not prevailed against it, nor ever shall.

The enemies' power has been broken. God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked; has cut their scourges, has cut the bands of union, by which they were combined together; has cut the bands of captivity, in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling wicked men from doing the mischief they design against his church.

These words, The Lord is righteous, may refer either to the distresses, or to the deliverances of the church. The Lord is righteous in suffering Israel to be afflicted. The people of God were always ready to own, that, how unjust soever their enemies were, God was just in all that was brought upon them, Neh. 9. 33. The Lord is righteous also in not suffering Israel to be ruined; for he has promised to preserve it a people to himself. He is righteous in reckoning with their persecutors, and rendering to them a recompense, 2 Thess. 1. 6.

Ver. 5—8. There are many that hate Zion, that hate Zion's God, his worship, and his worshippers; that have an antipathy to religion and religious people, that seek the ruin of both, and do what they can, that God may not have a church in the world. We ought to pray that all their attempts against the church may be frustrated, that they may be confounded, and turned back with shame, as those that have not been able to bring to pass their enterprise and expectation. They shall be all confounded. The confusion predicted is illustrated by a similitude. While God's people shall flourish, as the loaded palm-tree, or the green and fruitful olive, their enemies shall wither as the grass upon the house-tops.

The eastern houses were flat, and more capable of grass growing than ours; but, having no deep root, it never comes to maturity; so the designs of God's enemies never come to perfection.—(54.)

No wise man will pray God to bless these mowers or reapers, ver. 8. When it is said, None will bless them, and show them respect, more is implied, namely, that all wise and good people will cry out shame upon them, and beg of God to defeat them.

If we consider how Jesus was scourged, wounded, bruised, and crucified for us, and how prophets, apostles, and saints have been treated in all ages, we should not complain of hard measure if called to endure severer sufferings than those allotted to us. And did we remember how Jesus arose and reigns, and how his people have been supported, like the burning but unconsumed bush, we need not fear. Nature cannot furnish an emblem fully expressive of the confusion, contempt, and misery, which will overtake all that hate the church of Christ. >

PSALM CXXX.

This psalm relates not to any temporal concern, either personal or public, but it is wholly taken up in the affairs of the soul. We are all concerned to apply it to ourselves. The psalmist here expresses, (1.) His desire toward God, ver. 1, 2. His repentance before God, ver. 3, 4. (2.) His attendance upon God, ver. 5, 6. His expectations from God, ver. 7, 8.

The Syriac inscription is, that "it is said concerning Nehemiah, and it intimates in it the prayers of the martyrs."

Ver. 1—4. While sin plunges millions of unbelievers into the depths of hell, to rise no more, even believers are often brought by it under deep distress of conscience, fears of wrath, outward calamities, and sore temptations. What need then we have to watch against every approach of this evil. But whatever condition we are in, though ever so deplorable, we are to continue calling upon God, ver. 1. The best men may sometimes be in the depths of distress, and almost in the depths of despair; the spirit cast down and disquieted. But, in the greatest depths, this is our privilege, that we may cry unto God, and be heard. A prayer may reach the heights of heaven out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in, in this world. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower, and to recover us out of the horrible pit, and miry clay, 40. 1, 2.

The only way of a sin-entangled soul for relief is in an application to God alone. Many things without present themselves as a diversion, many things within offer themselves for a remedy; but the soul finds that God alone can heal. And until any one that is sensible of the guilt of sin will quit all reserves, to come immediately to God, it is in vain for him to expect any relief. Herein it is intense, earnest, and urgent, ver. 2. Alas, what strangers are men for the most part to this frame. Is not the reason of it that we value the world more, and heavenly things less than the psalmist? and hence we see so many withering and feeble professors. But shall the soul be slothful, careless, dull, and secure about its eternal concerns? Shall a soul, through its own folly, lose the sense of God's love, the consolation of his presence, and not follow hard after it? The Holy Ghost gives to such poor souls a fresh sense of their deep concerns, to stir them up unto earnest applications to God. The whole work is his, and he carries it on by means suited to compass the end. The application is made by the prayer of faith, or crying to God, which is done, with importunity and constancy. As poor creatures love their peace, as they love their souls, as they are concerned for the glory of God, they are not to be wanting in this duty. Why is it that these matters are so long uncertain with them? Is it not from sloth and despondency that they content them-

selves with ordinary and customary applications to God? Then let us up and be doing; it must be done, and it is attended with safety.—(52.)

We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God, as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences, ver. 3. Let us then learn to acknowledge our iniquities, that we cannot justify ourselves before God, or plead not guilty. If he should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, and if he proceed against us, we have no way to help ourselves, we cannot stand. If God deal with us in strict justice, we are undone; our iniquities are many and great; greatly aggravated, and very provoking: and if he should proceed accordingly, and shut us up under his wrath, what could we do? We could not escape, or resist, or bear up under his avenging hand. Let us admire God's patience and forbearance; we were undone if he should mark iniquities; he therefore bears with us. It is of his mercy that we are not consumed by his wrath.

We are taught to cast ourselves upon the pardoning mercy of God, when we see ourselves obnoxious to his justice, ver. 4. Here is God's grace discovered, and pleaded with him, by a penitent sinner; But there is forgiveness with thee. It is our unspeakable comfort that there is forgiveness with him, for that is what we need. He has declared himself gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive, Exod. 34. 6, 7. He has promised to forgive the sins of all those that repent. There is a propitiation with thee, so some read it. Jesus Christ is the great Propitiation, the Ransom which God has found; he is ever an Advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness. The chief of sinners may bow before the mercy-seat, become an accepted worshipper, and stand pardoned, and cleansed, and accepted before his holy tribunal. Faith in his mercy, and experience of its effects, form the soul to holy fear and love of the Lord our God. There is forgiveness with thee, not that thou mayest be presumed upon, but that thou mayest be feared, that thou mayest be worshipped and served by the children of men. We may expect the benefit of the forgiveness that is with God, when we make him the object of our holy fear.

The fear of God, in the Old Testament, frequently expresses the whole worship of

God, wherein that and all other affections towards God are to be exercised. The foundation of this fear or worship, the only motive and encouragement for sinners to engage in it, and give themselves up to it, is this, that there is forgiveness with God. The end of all these things is to encourage poor sinners to believe, and to show how inexcusable they are, who, notwithstanding all this, through the power of their lusts and unbelief, refuse to come to God in Christ that they may be pardoned.—(52.)

Ver. 5—8. Observe, 1. His dependence upon God, I wait for the Lord, ver. 5; from him I expect relief and comfort, believing it will come, longing till it does come, but patiently bearing the delay, and resolving to look for it from no other hand. My soul doth wait; I wait for him in sincerity, not in profession only. It is for the Lord that my soul waits, for the gifts of his grace, and the operations of his power. 2. The ground of that dependence, In his word do I hope. We must hope for that only, which he has promised in his word, and not for the creatures of our own fancy and imagination; we must hope for this because he has promised it, not from any opinion of our own merit. 3. The degree of that dependence, More than they that watch for the morning, ver. 6, who are well assured that the morning will come; and so am I, that God will return in mercy to me, according to his promise, for God's covenant is more firm than the ordinances of day and night; they shall come to an end, but that is everlasting. And like those who, being very desirous that it would come, long before day wish to see the dawn, but still more earnestly does this good man long for the tokens of God's favour, and the visits of his grace; and more readily will he be aware of its first appearances, than they are of day.

He encourages all the people of God thus to depend upon him, and trust in him. Let Israel hope in the Lord, and wait for him. Let all that devote themselves to God cheerfully stay themselves upon him, ver. 7, 8; and that, 1. Because the God of Israel is a merciful God, and the Father of mercies. Mercy is with him; inherent in his nature; it is his delight; it is with him in all his works, in all his counsels. 2. Because the light of the gospel discovers to us that there is redemption with

him, contrived by him, and to be wrought out in the fulness of time. See here the nature of this redemption. It is redemption from sin, from all sin; and therefore can be no other than that eternal redemption which Jesus Christ became the Author of; for it is he that saves his people from their sins, Matt. 1. 21, that redeems them from all iniquity, Tit. 2. 14, and turns away ungodliness from Jacob, Rom. 11. 26. It is he that redeems us, both from the condemning and from the commanding power of sin. See here also the riches of this redemption; it is plentiful redemption; there is an all-sufficient fulness in the Redeemer, enough for all, enough for each; enough for me, says the believer. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils, and therefore is a plentiful redemption, through the atoning blood of Jesus, who shall redeem his people from all their iniquities. The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong, are, Israel according to the spirit; all those who are in covenant with God, who are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

A saving participation of grace and forgiveness leaves a deep impression of its fulness and excellency on the soul of a sinner. Thus the psalmist, having himself obtained forgiveness, knows no bounds or measure in extolling it. There is with God redemption, plentiful redemption, redeeming from all iniquity; he has found it so, and so will every one who shall believe it. All that wait on God for mercy and grace shall have an undoubted issue of peace. Let him, saith God, lay hold of my arm, that he may have peace, and he shall have peace, Isa. 27. 5.—(52.)

PSALM CXXXI.

The psalmist appeals to God that he aimed at nothing high or great, ver. 1. He was very easy in every condition which God allotted him, ver. 2, and therefore he encourages all believers to trust in God as he did, ver. 3.

The psalmist aimed not at a high condition; if God had so ordered, he could have been well content to spend all his days, as he did the beginning of them, in the sheep-folds. Humble saints cannot think so well of themselves as others think of them; nor do they magnify their own attainments or achievements. The love

of God reigning in the heart will subdue all inordinate self-love. He had neither a scornful nor an aspiring look. Where there is a proud heart, there is commonly a proud look, Prov. 6. 17.

He did not employ himself in things that were too great or too high for him. He made God's word his meditation, and did not amuse himself with matters of nice speculation or doubtful disputation, or covet to be wise above what is written. To know God and our duty is learning sufficiently high for us. He did not employ himself in affairs too great. It is our wisdom, and will be our praise, to keep within our sphere, and not to meddle with that which does not belong to us. Those will fall under due shame, that affect undue honours.

He was well reconciled to every condition that God placed him in. He had been as humble as a little child about the age of weaning, as manageable and governable, and as far from aiming at high things; as entirely at God's disposal, as the child at the disposal of the mother or nurse. Our Saviour has taught us humility by this comparison, Matt. 18. 3; we must become as little children. He had been as indifferent to the wealth and honour of this world as a child is to the breast, when it is thoroughly weaned from it; "as a child that is weaned." This intimates that our hearts are naturally desirous of worldly things, cry for them, are fond of them, and cannot live without them. But by the grace of God, a soul that is sanctified, is weaned from those things. Providence puts wormwood upon our delights, and that helps to wean us. The child is perhaps cross and fretful while in the weaning, and thinks itself undone when it has lost the breast; but in a day or two that is forgotten, and it accommodates itself to a new way of feeding; cares no longer for milk, but can bear strong meat. Thus does a gracious soul quiet itself under the loss of that which it loved, and disappointment in that which it hoped for, and is easy, whatever happens; lives upon God's comforts and the covenant-grace, when creatures are withdrawn. When our condition is not to our mind, we must bring our mind to our condition; and then we are easy to ourselves, and all about us; then our souls are as a weaned child.

David recommends confidence in God to all the Israel of God, from his own

experience of the benefit of it, ver. 3; Let Israel hope in the Lord, and let them continue to do so, from henceforth and for ever. It is good to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.

Yet the Lord may call a believer forth, and make it his duty to engage in important and public undertakings, and his zeal and love may be called ambition and ostentation by his enemies. But he can appeal to the heart-searching God; and his true humility will appear even in the highest stations, by teachableness of spirit, patience under delays and contradictions, determination to use no unhallowed means, and a meek spirit under unjust suspicions.

Thus did the meek and lowly Jesus pursue his heavenly path. He was accused of aspiring to honours that did not belong to him; but his glorious resurrection and exaltation refuted the calumny. Of him David was the type; let his disciples copy his example of humility, heavenly-mindedness, active love, and patience under the cross. Let all such Israelites hope in the Lord under every reproach and affliction, from henceforth and for ever.

PSALM CXXXII.

The psalmist, (1.) Pleads David's care about a residence for the ark; and entreats God to take possession of his temple, and to bless his priests and people, ver. 1—10. (2.) He declares the promises of God to David and his house, ver. 11—18.

Ver. 1—10. Observe, whom David bound himself to; to the Lord, to the mighty God of Jacob; Jacob's God, and a mighty One, whose power is engaged for Jacob's defence and deliverance. He bound himself to find out a place for the Lord, for the ark, the token of his presence. He was intent upon it; he would not settle in his house; nay, he would not sleep in his bed, till he had brought this matter to some decision, ver. 3, 4. When work is to be done for God, it is good for us to tie ourselves to a time, because we are apt to put off. It is good in the morning to fix upon work for the day, binding ourselves that we will do it before we sleep, only with submission to Providence; for we know not what a day may bring forth. Especially in the great work of conversion to God, we must be

thus solicitous, thus zealous; we have good reason to resolve that we will not enjoy the comforts of this life, till we have laid a foundation for hopes of a better. We should first, and without delay, seek to have our own hearts made a habitation of God through the Spirit.

It was in pursuance of the expectations of the people of Israel, ver. 6, 7; 1 Sam. 7. 2. They heard of the ark at Ephrathah, at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim; it had been there, but it was gone; they found it in Kirjath-jearim, which signifies the city of woods. They were resolved to attend it. Let us have a convenient place, and we will go into God's tabernacle, to pay our homage there; we will worship at his footstool, as subjects and supplicants.

He prays, ver. 8—10, that God would vouchsafe, not only to take possession of, but to take up his residence in this habitation which he had built. That God would give grace to the ministers of the sanctuary to do their duty. They are thy priests, and will therefore discredit their relation to thee, if they are not clothed with righteousness. That the people of God might have the comfort of the due administration of holy ordinances among them. A faithful ministry is the joy of the saints; it is the matter of it; it is a friend and a furtherance to it; we are helpers of your joy, 2 Cor. 1. 24.

He pleads that he was the anointed of the Lord, and this he pleads as a type of Christ, the great Anointed, who, in his intercession, urges his designation to his office. He is God's Anointed, and therefore the Father hears him always. He is David, whose name signifies beloved; and we are made accepted in the Beloved. He is God's Servant, whom he upholds, Isa. 42. 1. We have no merit of our own to plead, but, for His sake, in whom there is a fulness of merit, let us find favour. When we pray for the prosperity of the church, we may use great boldness, for Christ's sake, who purchased the church with his own blood. Let both ministers and people do their duty.

And every christian or believer in Christ is an anointed one, and has received the unction from the Holy One, the oil of true grace. The request is, that God would not turn such away from him, and cause them to depart from his throne of grace ashamed and disappointed; but hear and answer their petitions for his Son's sake.—(27.)

8, 9, 10. These words were used by Solomon at the dedication of the temple, 2 Chron. 6. 41, 42.

Ver. 11—18. These are precious promises, relating both to the throne of the house of David, and to the testimony of Israel fixed on mount Zion. The promises concerning Zion's hill are as applicable to the gospel church, as these concerning David's seed are to Christ.

The promise made to David refers to a long succession of kings from him. The crown was promised conditionally to his heirs for ever, ver. 12. But the issue of this was, that they did not keep God's covenant, so the sceptre departed from Judah by degrees. But it more especially relates to an everlasting Successor, a King that should descend from him, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. St. Peter applies this to Christ; he said that David himself so understood it, Acts 2. 30. He fulfilled the condition of the promise; he did his Father's will, and in all things pleased him; therefore to him, and his spiritual seed, the promise shall be made good; he, and the children God has given him, all believers, shall sit upon his throne for evermore, Rev. 3. 21. If the Lord answered the prayers that were grounded on his covenant with David, he will never turn his face from us, when we plead the covenant made with his anointed Prophet, Priest, and King.

God chose the mount Zion for the habitation of his ark, and said of it, This is my rest for ever, and not my residence for a time, as Shiloh was, ver. 13, 14. Zion must here be looked upon as a type of the gospel church, which is the house of the living God, 1 Tim. 3. 15, and it is his rest for ever, and shall be blessed with his presence always, even to the end of the world. The delight God takes in his church, and the continuance of his presence with his church, are the comfort and joy of all its members.

How inexpressible is the love of God to man, that he should use such expressions concerning his church. He is pleased to say that it is his desire to dwell with us; yet how little do we desire to dwell with him! In Zion he fixed his abode till the iniquities of Israel caused him to give them up as a prey to the spoilers. Since that time his tabernacle has been removed into the possession of the Gentiles. Forsake us not, O God, and deliver us not in like manner, sinful though we

are, into the hands of the enemy and avenger.—(32.)

Observe the choice blessings God has in store for David's house and Zion's hill. He promises to bless with the blessings of the life that now is; for godliness has the promise of them, ver. 15. Where religion is esteemed and followed, there shall be provision, and in blessing God will bless it, 67. 6; he will surely and abundantly bless it. And a little provision, with an abundant blessing upon it, will be more serviceable, as well as more comfortable, than a great deal without that blessing. God's people have a special blessing upon common enjoyments, and that blessing puts a peculiar sweetness into them. Nay, the promise goes further; I will satisfy her poor with bread. Zion's poor shall not want, for God has obliged all the sons of Zion to be charitable to the poor, according to their ability, and the church must take care that they be not neglected, Acts 6. 1. By his grace they shall be kept from complaining; though they have but dry bread, yet they shall be satisfied. Zion's poor have, of all others, reason to be content with a little of this world, because they have better things prepared for them. And this may be understood spiritually of the provision that is made for the soul, in the word and ordinances. God will abundantly bless that, for the nourishment of the new man, and satisfy the poor in spirit with the bread of life. What God sanctifies to us, we shall and may be satisfied with.

God also promises to bestow the blessings of the life that is to come, things pertaining to godliness, ver. 16. It was desired that the priests might be clothed with righteousness; it is here promised that God will clothe them with salvation; not only save them, but make them and their administrations instrumental for the salvation of his people. Whom God clothes with righteousness he will clothe with salvation; we must pray for righteousness, and then with it God will give salvation. God gives more than we ask, and when he gives salvation, he will give an abundant joy.

God, having chosen David's family, promises to bless it with suitable blessings.

1. Growing power. There, in Zion, will I make the horn of David to bud, ver. 17. The royal dignity shall increase

more and more, and constant additions be made to the lustre of it.

2. Lasting honour. A lamp is a successor; for when a lamp is almost out, another may be lighted by it. It is a succession; by this means David shall not want a man to stand before God. Christ is the Lamp and the Light of the world.

3. Complete victory. Let the enemies of all good governors expect to be clothed with shame, and especially the enemies of the Lord Jesus and his government, who shall rise, in the great day, to everlasting shame and contempt.

4. Universal prosperity. Upon himself shall his crown flourish; his government shall be more and more his honour. This was to have its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ.

It is here predicted that God would blast and bring to nothing every design formed to destroy the house of David, until King Messiah should arise out of it, to sit upon the throne of his Father. In him all the promises centre, and the kingdom is established for ever. His enemies, who will not have him to reign over them, shall at the last day be clothed with shame and everlasting confusion; but upon himself shall his crown flourish, filling heaven and earth with the brightness of his glory.—(32.)

PSALM CXXXIII.

This psalm is a brief encomium on unity and brotherly love, which, if we did not see the miseries of discord among men, we should think needless; but we cannot say too much, it were well if we could say enough, to persuade people to live together in peace. It is a psalm of general use to all societies, lesser and larger, civil and sacred. Here is the doctrine laid down of the happiness of brotherly love, ver. 1. The illustration of that doctrine, in two similitudes, ver. 2, 3. The proof, in a good reason given for it, ver. 3; and then we are left to make the application, which we ought to do to ourselves and one another. This is the benefit of the communion of saints.

The Syriac inscription states, "There is an intimation in it of the perfect people." The Christians in gospel times.—*Gill*.

See what is here commended. The goodness and pleasantness of brethren dwelling together in unity; to dwell as

one, so some read it; as having one heart, one soul, one interest. It is good in itself, agreeable to the will of God, the conformity of earth to heaven. It is good for us, for our honour and comfort; and brings constant delight to those who do thus live in unity. Behold, how good! We cannot conceive or express the goodness and pleasantness of it. Behold it as rare. Behold and wonder that there should be so much goodness and pleasantness among men, so much of heaven on this earth! Behold this as an exemplary thing, which is to be imitated by us with a holy emulation.

Observe how the pleasantness of this is illustrated. It is fragrant as the holy anointing oil, which was strongly perfumed, and diffused its odours, when poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor the high-priest, so plentifully, as to run down even to the collar or binding of the garment, ver. 2. This was holy ointment; such must our brotherly love be, with a pure heart, devoted to God, 1 John 5. 1. This ointment was a composition made up by Divine direction. Thus believers are taught of God to love one another; it is a grace of his working in us, for love is of God; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, 1 John 4. 16. This is the fruit of the Spirit, the image of Christ, the evidence of our union with him, and the ornament of his gospel. Christ's love to mankind was part of that oil of gladness with which he was anointed above his fellows. Aaron and his sons were not admitted to minister unto the Lord till they were anointed with this ointment, nor are our services acceptable to God without this holy love; if we have it not, we are nothing, 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2.

It is profitable as well as pleasing; it is as the dew, and brings blessings numerous as the drops of dew. It cools the scorching heat of men's passions, as the evening dews cool the air and refresh the earth. It contributes very much to our fruitfulness in every thing that is good; moistens the heart, and makes it tender and fit to receive the good seed of the word; as, on the contrary, malice and bitterness unfit us to receive it, 1 Pet. 2. 1. It is as the dew of Hermon, a common hill; for brotherly love is the beauty and benefit of civil societies: and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, a holy hill, for it contributes greatly

to the fruitfulness of sacred societies. Both Hermon and Zion will wither without this dew. The dew tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men, Mic. 5. 7. Nor should our love to our brethren stay for theirs to us, but should go before; that is Divine love.

See the proof of the excellency of brotherly love. Loving people are blessed people; for they are blessed of God, and therefore blessed indeed. Where brethren dwell together in unity, the Lord commands the blessing. It is God's prerogative to command the blessing; man can but beg a blessing. Blessings according to the promise, are commanded blessings, for he has commanded his covenant for ever. Blessings that take effect are commanded blessings, for he speaks, and it is done.

Life for evermore is the blessing of blessings. They that dwell in love, not only dwell in God, but do already dwell in heaven. As the perfection of love is the blessedness of heaven, so the sincerity of love is the earnest of that blessedness. They that live in love and peace, shall have the God of love and peace with them now, and they shall be with him shortly, with him for ever, in the world of endless love and peace. How good then is this, and how pleasant! May all who love the Lord at length make trial, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them.

3. The most elevated part of the eastern ridge of Lebanon, or the Anti-Libanus, was called Hermon. Travellers have observed that very copious dews fall there. *Pococke* thinks it probable that a lower part of it had the name of Sion; see Deut. 4. 49. Thus the precious ointment poured upon Aaron, is compared to this dew falling from the top of Hermon down to the lower parts. It is, however, here written Zion, not Sion.

PSALM CXXXIV.

This psalm contains the psalmist's exhortation to the watchers in the sanctuary to bless the Lord, and their prayer for a blessing on him. Some make this psalm to be a dialogue. In the two first verses, the priests or Levites, who by night kept the watch of the house of the Lord, are called upon to employ their time in the acts of devotion. In the last verse, those who were thus called upon to praise God, pray for him who gave them the exhortation. Or, those who did that

service, mutually exhorted and prayed for one another. We must both stir up ourselves to give glory to God, and encourage ourselves to hope for mercy and grace from him.

The Levites were the servants of the Lord by office, appointed to minister in holy things; they attended the sanctuary, and kept the charge of the house of the Lord, Numb. 3. 6, &c. Some of them did by night stand in the house of the Lord, to guard the holy things of the temple, that they might not be profaned, and the rich things of the temple, that they might not be plundered. While the ark was within curtains, there was the more need of guards upon it. They attended likewise to see that neither the fire nor the lamps went out. Probably, it was usual for some devout and pious Israelites to be with them: we read of one that departed not from the temple night or day, Luke 2. 37. Now these are here called upon to bless the Lord. Thus they must keep themselves awake by keeping themselves employed; thus they must redeem time for holy exercises: and how can we spend our time better than in praising God? It is an excellent plan to fill up the vacancies of time with pious meditations, and prayers and praises.

No time would then be a burden, nor would there be need to murder our hours by trifling conversation and vain amusements, or by carnal indulgences; but all the time that could be spared from needful business and recreation would be employed delightfully. All that comes short of this is equally distant from perfection; is the effect of the fall, and the remainder of depravity; and without some portion of it we are not christians.

Here is also a call to us, who, as christians, are made priests to our God, and Levites, Isa. 66. 21. We are the servants of the Lord, we have a place and a name in his house, in his sanctuary, we stand before him to minister to him; even by night we are under his eye, and have access to him. Let us therefore bless the Lord, think and speak of his glory and goodness; let us lift up our hands in prayer, in praise; let us do our work with diligence and cheerfulness, and elevation of mind.

We are taught to desire God's blessing, ver. 3. We need desire no more to make us happy, than to be blessed of the Lord;

for those whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. Blessings out of Zion, spiritual blessings; the blessings of the covenant, and of communion with God, are the best blessings, which we should be most earnest for. There is a great encouragement to us, when we come to God for a blessing, that it is He who made heaven and earth, and therefore has all the blessings of both at his disposal. We ought to beg these blessings, not only for ourselves, but for others also; not only, The Lord bless *me*, but, The Lord bless *thee*; thus testifying our belief of the fulness of Divine blessings, that there is enough for others as well as for us, and showing our good will also to others. We must pray for them that exhort us.

Christians are the redeemed of the Lord, redeemed from the guilt and dominion of sin, delivered out of the hands of their enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, that they may become servants of Christ.—(32.)

PSALM CXXXV.

This psalm begins (1.) With a call to praise God, particularly a call to the servants of the Lord to praise him, ver. 1—3. God is to be praised as the God of Jacob, ver. 4. (2.) As the God of gods, ver. 5. As the God of the whole world, ver. 6, 7. As a terrible God to the enemies of Israel, ver. 8—11. As a gracious God to Israel, both in what he had done for them, and what he would do, ver. 12—14. (3.) As the only living God, all other gods being vanity and a lie, ver. ~~15~~ 18. It concludes with another exhortation to praise God, ver. 19—21.

Ver. 1—4. How lamentable it is that we should need so much exciting to praise the Lord, and be so slack and formal, when we have so much cause to abound therein. The goodness of the Lord, and the pleasantness of the work, would endear his praises to us, if our hearts were free from the evil of sin.

The subject-matter of praise is delightful—the blessings of grace flowing from the everlasting love of God. Or, “His name is pleasant,” ver. 3, for though it is holy and reverend in itself, and fearful and terrible to sinners; yet as proclaimed in Christ it is very delightful. In him all the Divine perfections are glorified. The name of God as a covenant God and

Father in Christ, blessing with all spiritual blessings in him, is exceedingly pleasant; as are all the names of Christ, and therefore to be praised.—(27.)

Observe the peculiar privileges of God's people, ver. 4. The Lord hath chosen Jacob to himself, and therefore Jacob is bound to praise him; for therefore God chose a people to himself, that they might be unto him for a name and a praise, Jer. 13. 11. Israel is God's peculiar treasure above all people, Exod. 19. 5; they are a people appropriated to him, and that he has a delight in, precious in his sight, and honourable. If the seed of Jacob do not praise him for this distinguishing favour, they are the most unworthy and ungrateful of all people.

Ver. 5—14. We should praise God, for to the Lord we owe our being, our rational powers, and all our outward comforts; those which demand our gratitude. But the tokens and wonders he wrought for Israel, and the heritage he gave them, are feeble shadows of the mercy he hath shown to his true Israel—the redemption wrought out and the inheritance prepared for them; every past and present favour is a token of his future and eternal love.

The psalmist triumphs in the perpetuity of God's glory and grace. 1. Of his glory, ver. 13; God's manifestations of himself to his people have everlasting fruits and consequences. His name endures for ever in the constant and everlasting praises of his people; his memorial endures, has endured hitherto, and shall still endure, throughout all generations of the church. God is, and will be always the same to his church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God. And his church is, and will be the same to him, a thankful, praising people; and thus his name endures for ever. 2. Of his grace: he will be kind to his people. He will plead their cause against others that contend with them. He will not himself contend for ever with them; he will be entreated for them; he will return in ways of mercy to them, and will delight to do them good. The 14th verse is taken from the song of Moses, Deut. 32. 36.

Ver. 15—21. The design of these verses is to arm the people of God against idolatry and all false worship, by showing what sort of gods they were that the

heathen worshipped, as 115. 4, &c. Their worshippers were as stupid and senseless as the idols were; both those that made them to be worshipped, and those that trusted in them when they were made, ver. 18. Let our worshipping of a God that is a spirit, make us spiritual and wise.

The more deplorable the condition of the Gentile nations that worship idols is, the more are we bound to thank God that we know better, ver. 19—21. Therefore, let us employ ourselves in acts of devotion, and bless him. All persons that know God, are here called to praise him: the house of Israel, the nation in general; the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi, the Lord's ministers that attended in his sanctuary; and all others that feared the Lord, though they were not of the house of Israel. Let God have the glory of all; Blessed be the Lord. The condescension of his grace, in dwelling with men upon the earth, calls for our grateful and thankful returns, and our repeated hallelujahs.

While we lament over, and detest the idolatries and impieties of the world around us, let us remember with gratitude who hath made us to differ. Let us pity and pray for benighted heathens and deluded sinners. Let us, whether ministers or private christians, while we trust in and fear the Lord, bless him in his church on earth; rejoice in hope of praising him in his holy habitation in heaven; and endeavour to glorify his name, and recommend his truth, not only with our lips but by our holy lives, copying the example of Christ's righteousness, goodness, and truth, in all our dealings with our brethren and neighbours.

PSALM CXXXVI.

This psalm is very like the preceding, but it is rendered remarkable by the repetition of that sweet sentence, "For his mercy endureth for ever," at the end of every verse. The psalm shows that in every particular favour we ought to take notice of the mercy of God, and to take notice of it as enduring still, the same now that it has been, and enduring for ever, the same always that it is. We must praise God, (1.) As great and good in himself, ver. 1—3. As the Creator of the world, ver. 5—9. (2.) As Israel's God and Saviour, ver. 10—22. (3.) As our Redeemer, ver. 23, 24. As the great

Benefactor of the whole creation, and God over all, blessed for evermore, ver. 25, 26.

Ver. 1—9. Forgetful as we are, repetitions become necessary and beneficial to us. By mercy, we understand the Lord's disposition to compassionate and relieve those whom sin has rendered miserable and vile; his readiness to forgive, be reconciled to, and bless the most provoking transgressors; and all the provision he hath made for the exercise of mercy in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ. The counsels of this mercy have been from everlasting, and the effects of it will be eternal to all who are interested in it. The Lord continues equally ready to show mercy to all who seek for it, and this is the source of all our hopes and comforts.

The works of creation proclaim the wisdom, power, and goodness of the God of gods, and Lord of lords; while the continuance of the settled course of nature, and the blessings thus communicated to a rebellious world, are proofs of the patience and ever enduring mercy of our God.

Ver. 10—22. The great things God did for Israel, when he first formed them into a people, and set up his kingdom among them, are here mentioned, as often elsewhere in the psalms, as instances both of the power of God, and of the particular kindness he had for Israel.

He brought them out of Egypt, ver. 10—12. That was a mercy which endured long to them, and our redemption by Christ, which was typified by that, does indeed endure for ever, for it is an eternal redemption. He opened them a way through the Red Sea. He not only divided the sea, but gave his people courage to go through it when it was divided; which was an instance of God's power over men's hearts, as the former was of his power over the waters. And to make it a miracle of justice as well as mercy, the same Red Sea that opened to the Israelites, was a grave to their pursuers.

He conducted them through a vast howling wilderness, ver. 16; there he led them and fed them; their camp was victualled and guarded by a constant series of miracles, for forty years; though they wandered there, they were not lost. And the constancy of that mercy was the more observable, because they often

provoked him in the wilderness, and grieved him in the desert.

He destroyed kings before them, ver. 17, 18; in which appeared his wrath against them, but his mercy, his never-failing mercy, to Israel. It is good to enter into the detail of God's favours, and in each instance to observe, and own that God's mercy endureth for ever. He put them in possession of a good land, ver. 21, 22. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full, and therefore it was taken from them. In this, God's mercy to them endureth for ever, because it was a figure of the heavenly Canaan, the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Ver. 23—26. God's everlasting mercy is here celebrated, in the redemption of his church; in the provision made for all the creatures; and in all his glories, and all his gifts.

Blessed be His name who hath remembered us in our low estate, and hath provided and revealed salvation to us, through his Son. May we all experience his redeeming power in our hearts, that, being saved from all our enemies, we may serve him in righteousness all our days—may He who giveth food to all flesh feed our souls unto eternal life; and may he enliven our affections by his grace, that we may give thanks and praise to his holy name, for his mercy endureth for ever.

There is no truth so often repeated and so much magnified in scripture as this. No truth more delightful to sinful yet immortal creatures. His mercy will extend through a blessed eternity; it will be the everlasting song of heaven, and therefore should be our joy and our song in the house of our pilgrimage. Let us trace up all the favours we receive to this true source, and offer the sacrifice of praise continually.—(4.)

PSALM CXXXVII.

Several psalms are thought to have been penned in the latter days of the Jewish church, but none of them appears so plainly to be of a late date, as this, which was penned when the people of God were captives in Babylon, and there insulted over by their proud oppressors. It is a mournful psalm, a lamentation; and the Greek version makes it one of the lamentations of Jeremiah, naming him for the author of it. Here, (1.) The pious Jews in Babylon bewail their captivity,

and the contempt of the victors, ver. 1—4. (2.) They express unalienable affection for Jerusalem, ver. 5, 6. They call upon God to execute the vengeance foretold upon Edom and Babylon, ver. 7—9.

Ver. 1—4. The occasion of this psalm is evident. The captive Jews, by the waters of Babylon, sat down and wept while they remembered their former prosperity. Especially they remembered with tears the desolate state of the holy city, and the temple of God, their own want of sacred ordinances, and the ruined state of the church and people of Israel. All this was occasioned by national transgressions to which they had all contributed.

They laid by their instruments of music; their spirits were so sad that they had no heart to use them. Yet perhaps they were faulty in doing thus; for praising God is never out of season, it is his will that we should in every thing give thanks, Isa. 24. 15, 16.

Their enemies had carried them away captive from their own land, and then wasted them in the land of their captivity; to complete their woes, they insulted over them, they required of them mirth and a song. This was very barbarous and inhuman. It was also profane and impious; no songs would serve them but the songs of Zion; in this demand they reflected upon God himself; as Belshazzar, when he drank wine in temple-bowls. Their enemies mocked at their sabbaths, Lam. 1. 7.

They had laid by their harps, and would not resume them, no, not to ingratiate themselves with those at whose mercy they were. Profane scoffers are not to be complied with. The reason they gave is very mild and pious. They do not say, How shall we sing, when we are so much in sorrow? but, It is the Lord's song, it is a sacred thing, it is peculiar to the temple-service, and therefore we dare not sing it in a strange land, among idolaters.

2. Willows still are plentiful on the banks of the Euphrates. The Jews, when dispersed, seem to have been accustomed to hold their religious meetings on the banks of rivers: see Acts 16. 13, and ver. 1.

3. Jowett observed a number of persons engaged in some forced labours for the Pacha of Egypt. To give vivacity and quickness to their proceedings they were forced to sing.

Ver. 5, 6. The Jews retained constant affection for Jerusalem. Even now that they were in Babylon, their love to it is

not in the least abated. What we love, we love to think of. They that rejoice in God, do, for his sake, make Jerusalem their joy, and prefer it before that which is dearest to them in this world. They steadfastly resolved to keep up this affection, which they express by a solemn imprecation of mischief to themselves if they should let it fall. Though they dare not sing Zion's songs among the Babylonians, yet they cannot forget them, but as soon as the present restraint is taken off, they will sing them as readily as ever.

When suffering the effects of our personal and national transgressions, we should recollect with godly sorrow our forfeited mercies, and our sins by which we have lost them. While worldly men grieve for the loss of outward privileges, the believer mourns over his banishment from the ordinances of God, especially when he hears the insults and blasphemies of infidels and profane scoffers. In such circumstances, it is hard to preserve the mind in tranquillity, and to be duly thankful for remaining unmerited mercies. Yet no calamity, no strange land, no prevalence of ungodliness, no despised oppressed state of the church, should induce us to forget "Jerusalem." If temporal advantages ever render a professor satisfied at a distance from the ordinances of God, ashamed of his despised cause, or indifferent to the interests of the church, so as not to prefer them to his chief joy, a worse calamity has befallen him than if his right hand were withered, or his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth.

Ver. 7—9. The Edomites will be reckoned with; and all others that were accessaries to the destruction of Jerusalem, that helped forward the affliction, Zech. 1. 15, and triumphed in it. All this was a fruit of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob; of that more ancient enmity between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Lord, remember them, says the psalmist; which is an appeal to his justice against them. Far be it from us to avenge ourselves, if ever it should be in our power; but we will leave it to Him who has said, Vengeance is mine. They that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished.

Babylon is the principal foe, and it will come to her turn to drink of the cup of trembling, the very dregs of it, ver. 8, 9.

Let not those expect to find mercy, who, when in power, did not show mercy.

The Lord will not forsake his church in her low estate. He will execute predicted vengeance on all her persecutors, and if professors join such in their prosperity, they will be joined with them in the day of wrath. We cannot pray for promised success to the church of God without implying a prayer for the ruin of her enemies; and those who are instruments of good to the people of God, must be, in one way or another, instrumental to the condemnation of impenitent sinners. Let us be decidedly on the Lord's part; destruction will be to the workers of iniquity, but his people though here, in a strange land, often insulted, despised, hated, and grieved, shall come to Zion, and rejoice in their God for evermore.

Can we behold the sorrows and miseries of Israel in captivity, and not call to mind the horrible slavery in which sin and Satan have bound us many a year? Did Israel weep under a sense of the bondage into which their rebellion and ingratitude had brought them, and shall we forget the state of unawakened nature, fast bound in the misery and iron of a captivity that none but Jehovah can deliver us from? Let us call to mind to whose grace and finished salvation it must alone be ascribed, that hopes of being brought home to the heavenly Jerusalem now arise.—(37.)

7. The Idumeans joined the army of Nebuchadnezzar against the Jews, and were active in razing the walls of Jerusalem.

8, 9. These two verses refer to the Divine vengeance executed upon Babylon by Cyrus, which is the subject of many chapters in Isaiah and Jeremiah. The slaughter of the infants mentioned in ver. 9; is expressly predicted by Isaiah, 13. 16. The description of the fall of the mystical Babylon, Rev. 18. &c., is given in language which had reference in the first instance to the ancient Babylon.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

The psalmist (1.) Praises God for performing his promise, and answering prayer, ver. 1—3. He predicts the conversion of all kings and nations, and their joy in God, ver. 4, 5. (2.) He declares the Lord's method of dealing with the humble and the proud, and his own expectations from him, ver. 6—8.

Ver. 1—5. When we can praise God with our whole heart, we need not be unwilling for the whole world to witness our

gratitude and joy in him. The psalmist will praise in the way that God had appointed; I will worship toward thy holy temple. Christ is our temple, and toward him we must look with faith, as Mediator between us and God, in all our praises of him. Heaven is God's holy temple, and thitherward we must lift up our eyes, in all our addresses to God. Those who rely on his loving-kindness and truth through Jesus Christ, will ever find him faithful to his word. If he spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? Rom. 8. 32.

Observe, the answer was a spiritual answer, ver. 3; God gave him strength in his soul, and that is a real and valuable answer to the prayer of faith in the day of affliction. If God give us strength in our souls, to bear the burdens, resist the temptations, and do the duties of an afflicted state; if he strengthen us to keep hold of himself by faith, to maintain the peace of our own minds, and to wait with patience for the issue, we must own that he has answered us, and we are bound to be thankful.

In the day when the Redeemer cried in the agony of his soul, he was heard, and strengthened to finish the arduous work assigned to him. Having humbled himself even to the death upon the cross, he is now exalted to the throne of glory, Phil. 2. 8—11. And for his sake all will be strengthened who fervently seek in his name, in faith, hope, love, and patience, that they may be carried through all their trials, Eph. 3. 16; Col. 1. 11.

From verse 4, 5, this appears to be a prophetic psalm. The call of the Gentiles to the gospel is here foretold in words which cannot be mistaken; and the redemption of the church, in Christ her Head, is spoken of as the subject of thanksgiving among the kings of the earth. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. For this reason, all the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O God.—(32.)

Ver. 6—8. Though the Lord is high, yet he hath respect to every lowly humbled sinner; but the proud, impenitent, and unbelieving, are known by him as his enemies, and will be banished far from his blissful presence. Dr. Hammond makes this to be the sum of that gospel which the kings of the earth shall hear and wel-

come—that penitent sinners shall be accepted of God, but the impenitent cast out, Luke 18. 14.

Great indeed were the troubles in which the Lord Jesus walked, when in the flesh. He carried all our sorrows, because he bore all our sins. Yet he was revived, raised from the dead, exalted to his throne in heaven, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us, that we, who, in the days of our flesh, do also walk in trouble, may be revived by the Holy Spirit, the Giver of life and holiness.—(32.)

Divine consolations have enough in them to revive us, even when we walk in the midst of troubles, and are ready to die away for fear. As God has one hand to stretch out against his enemies, so he has another to save his own people. Christ is the right hand of the Lord, that shall save all those who serve him.

The Lord will perfect that which is most needful for us; and he knows best what is so. We are careful and cumbered about many things that do not concern us, but he knows what things really are of consequence to us, Matt. 6. 32, and he will order them for the best. Observe what the psalmist builds this confidence upon; Thy mercy, O Lord, endures for ever. If we give God the glory of his mercy, we may take to ourselves the comfort of it. Our hopes that we shall persevere, must be founded, not upon our own strength, for that will fail us, but upon the mercy of God, for that will not fail. This confidence does not supersede, but quickens prayer. Whatever good there is in us, it is the work of God's own hands; he works in us both to will and to do. The Lord will perfect the salvation of every true believer, Phil. 1. 6, and he will never forsake those whom he hath created anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works. Let all then, who trust in and call upon him, rejoice in him, and praise him.

PSALM CXXXIX.

This is a very pious devout meditation upon the doctrine of God's omniscience, which we should have our hearts fixed upon, and filled with, in singing this psalm. (1.) This doctrine is here asserted, and fully laid down, ver. 1—6. (2.) It is confirmed by two arguments. God is every where present, therefore he knows all, ver. 7—12. He made us, therefore he knows us, ver. 13—16. (3.) This doc-

trine may fill us with pleasing admiration of God, ver. 17, 18 : with a holy dread and detestation of sin and sinners, ver. 19—22 : and with a desire to be proved and directed in the right way, ver. 23, 24.

Ver. 1—6. David here lays down this great doctrine, That the God with whom we have to do, has a perfect knowledge of us, and that all our thoughts and actions are open before him. It is more profitable to meditate on Divine truths with application to our own cases, and with hearts lifted up to God in prayer, than with a curious or disputing frame of mind. That God knows all things—is omniscient—that he is every where—omnipresent ; are truths universally acknowledged, yet they seldom produce practical effects upon mankind, because they are seldom rightly taken hold upon, by faith.

He descends to particulars ; Thou knowest me and all my motions. Thou knowest all my imaginations ; thought is unknown to other mortals, it is often unobserved by ourselves, and yet thou understandest my thoughts afar off, even before I think them, and long after I have forgotten them. Or from afar, from the height of heaven thou seest into the depths of the heart, 33. 14. Thou knowest me and all my designs and untakings ; thou sighest, or winnowest my path, (so some,) so as thoroughly to distinguish between the good and evil of what I do. God takes notice of every step we take, every right step, and every by-step. He knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk toward, what company we walk with. Thou knowest me in all my retirements ; when I am withdrawn from all company, and am composing myself to rest, thou knowest what I have in my heart. Thou knowest me, and all I say ; there is not a vain word, not a good word, but thou knowest what it meant, from what thought it came, and with what design it was uttered. Thou hast laid thine hand upon me. Wherever we are, we are under the eye and hand of God. All his saints are in his hand. It is such a knowledge as I cannot comprehend, much less describe, ver. 6. We cannot by searching find out how God searches and finds us out ; nor do we know how we are known. Such meditations are suited to restrain us from sin when opportunity gives advantage to Satan's temptations ; and should counteract

sinful inclinations when they begin to move.

Ver. 7—16. David is sure that God perfectly knows him, and all his ways, because he is always under his eye. No flight can remove us out of God's presence ; " Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, from thy presence, from thy spiritual presence, from thyself, who art a Spirit ? " God is a Spirit ; we cannot see him, but he can see us ; Whither shall I flee from thy presence ? Not that he desired to go away from God ; Suppose I should be so foolish as to think of getting out of thy sight, whither can I go ?

He specifies the most distant places. In heaven ; If I ascend thither, as I hope to do shortly, thou art there ; and it will be my eternal bliss to be with thee there. In hell ; in Sheol ; which may be understood of the depth of the earth. Should we think to hide ourselves there, we should be mistaken. Or, it may be understood of the state of the dead ; removed out of the sight of all living, yet not out of the sight of the living God. Or, of the place of the damned ; If I make my bed in hell—an uncomfortable place to make a bed in, where there is no rest day or night, yet thousands will make their bed for ever in those flames—behold, thou art there, in thy power and justice. God's wrath is the fire which will there burn everlastingly, Rev. 14. 10. In the remotest corners of this world, should I flee to the utmost distant and obscure parts, I should find thee there ; I cannot go out of thy reach.

No veil can hide us from God's eye, no, not the thickest darkness, ver. 11, 12. When God divided between the light and darkness, it was with a reservation, that to himself the darkness and the light should still be both alike. There is no darkness or shadow of death where workers of iniquity may hide themselves. No disguise, how specious soever, can save any person or action from appearing in a true light before God. Secret haunts of sin are as open before God as the most open villainies.

On the other hand, the believer cannot be removed from the supporting, comforting presence of his almighty Friend. Should the persecutor take his life, his soul will the sooner ascend to heaven. The grave cannot separate his body from the love of his Saviour, who will raise it incorruptible and glorious. No outward

circumstances can separate him from his God. While in the path of duty, he may be happy in any situation by the exercise of faith, hope, and prayer.

God made us, and therefore, no doubt, he knows us. Eternal wisdom formed the plan, and by that almighty power raised the structure. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; we may justly be astonished at the admirable contrivance of these living temples, the composition of every part, and the harmony of all together.

Ver. 17—24. Here the psalmist acknowledges, with wonder and thankfulness, the care God had taken of him all his days, ver. 17, 18. God's counsels concerning us and our welfare have been precious, to admiration. They are deep in themselves, such as cannot be fathomed and comprehended. Providence has brought things about for our good, quite beyond our contrivance and foresight. They are dear to us; we must think of them with reverence, and yet with pleasure and thankfulness. How great is the sum of them! We cannot conceive how many God's kind counsels have been concerning us; and what variety of mercies we have received from him. We cannot conceive the multitude of God's compassions, which are all new every morning. It would help to keep us in the fear of the Lord all the day long, if, when we awake in the morning, our first thoughts were of him, and we then set him before us; and how shall we admire and bless our God for his precious salvation when we awake in the world of glory!

Surely we ought not to use our members and senses which are so curiously fashioned, as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. But our immortal and rational souls are a still more noble work and gift of God. Yet if it were not for his precious thoughts of love to us, our reason and immortality would, through our sins, prove the occasion of eternal misery. How should we then delight to meditate on his love to sinners in Jesus Christ, the sum of which exceeds all computation; the mercies thence derived are numberless as the sands of the sea, yet not one of them small, every one is great and very considerable.

He concludes that ruin will certainly be the end of sinners. God knows all the wickedness of the wicked, and therefore he

will reckon for it, however it may be artfully disguised and coloured over, to hide it from the world. Sin is hated, and sinners lamented, by all that fear God. I count them that are enemies to God as enemies to me, and will not have any intimacy with them.

He hated God's enemies, not in respect of their persons, but of their sins, whereby they were enemies to God, and this hatred is commendable.—(56.)

We should therefore warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, and protest against their crimes by separating from their company. Yet while we shun them, we should pray for them, as with God their conversion and salvation are possible.

As the Lord knows us thoroughly, and we are strangers to ourselves, we should earnestly desire, and pray to be searched and proved by his word and Spirit, ver. 23, 24. Thus we shall best be preserved from self-deception, be gradually purified from our remaining sinfulness, and led in the way of everlasting life. Lord, I hope I am not in a wicked way, but see if there be any wicked way in me, any corrupt inclination remaining; let me see it; and root it out of me, for I do not allow it.

These desires and prayers will evidence sincerity, and forward a comfortable assurance that we are the children of God, John 3. 19—21. The way of godliness is an everlasting way, it is everlastingly true and good; pleasing to God, and profitable to us; and will end in everlasting life. It is the good old way. All the saints desire to be kept and led in this way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, or tire in it.

PSALM CXL.

In this psalm, (1.) David complains of the malice of his enemies, and prays to God to preserve him from them, ver. 1—5. He encourages himself in God, as his God, ver. 6, 7. (2.) He prays for, and prophesies, the destruction of his persecutors, ver. 8—11. He assures all God's afflicted people that their troubles would in due time end well, ver. 12, 13.

Ver. 1—7. In this, as in other things, David was a type of Christ, that he suffered before he reigned, he was humbled before he was exalted; and that as there were many who loved and valued him, and sought to do him honour, so there

were many who hated and envied him, and sought to do him mischief.

He gives a character of his enemies, as dangerous and crafty men, whom he had reason to be afraid of, but wicked men, whom he had no reason to think the righteous God would countenance. Great persecutors have often been very subtle, but the Lord preserves the simple without their arts. They are very full of malice, and poison in the lips is a certain sign of poison in the heart. They are confederate. Those who can agree in nothing else, can agree to persecute a good man. They are proud, conceited, and confident of success; herein also they resemble Satan, whose reigning, ruining sin was pride.

He prays to God to keep him from them, and from being swallowed up by them. The more danger appears, the more earnest we should be in prayer to God. In him believers may count upon security, and may enjoy it and themselves with holy serenity. All those are safe, whom God preserves. If he be for us, who can be against us? In all such circumstances, therefore, we should especially watch and pray, that the Lord would hold up our goings in his ways, that our footsteps slip not.

He comforted himself with his interest in God. In troublous times it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him. Thou art my Stay and Support, my Ruler and Governor; nay, not only my Saviour, but my Salvation itself; not only a strong Saviour, but the very Strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hope is laid; all in all, to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness. God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care, in dangers of one kind, may encourage us to depend upon him in other dangers; for nothing can shorten the Lord's right hand.

Ver. 8—13. Believers may unreservedly pray that God would not grant the desires of the wicked, nor further their evil devices lest they grow more insolent. We may also be confident that false accusers will bring mischief upon themselves, even the burning coals of Divine vengeance, which will sink them into hell, to rise no more, unless timely repentance prevent the fatal doom.

When the Lord has proved the faith and patience of his afflicted people, he will maintain their cause, and do them justice against their oppressors. And surely the righteous shall dwell in God's presence, and give him thanks for evermore. This is true thanksgiving, even thanks-living; this use we should make of all our deliverances, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully.

Those, who, though traduced by men, evil spoken of and ill used by them, are righteous in the sight of God; being justified by the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to them, and received by faith, in consequence of which they live soberly and righteously—these the psalmist knew would give thanks to the Lord, for the righteousness whereby they are made righteous, and for every other blessing of grace, and mercy of life.—(27.)

Behold as in a glass, how maliciously Jesus Christ was reproached and persecuted; how he gave himself to prayer on account of it; and how the Divine vengeance overtook his Jewish murderers and persecutors! Let us also observe that sin turns men into a kind of devils, in deceit, malice, diligence in evil, and opposition to the people of God. But God resents the injuries done to them; he will kindly maintain the cause of his people, and afford them his presence for their protection.—(10.)

9. The word here rendered head, also signifies person. These verbs, as in other similar passages of the psalms, should all be rendered in the future tense.

PSALM CXLI.

David (1.) Prays for God's favourable acceptance, ver. 1, 2. For his powerful assistance, ver. 3, 4. (2.) That others might be instrumental of good to his soul, as he hoped to be to the souls of others, ver. 5, 6. That he and his friends, being now brought to the last extremity, God would graciously appear for their relief and rescue, ver. 7—10. The mercy and grace of God are as necessary to us as they were to him, and therefore we should be as earnest for them.

Ver. 1—4. Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to keep us from doing ill, we are here taught by David's example to pray to God for. David cried unto God; his crying to God denotes faith and fixedness in prayer. Make haste

unto me. Those that know how to value God's gracious presence, will be importunate for it.

The believer will maintain communion with his God wherever he goes; the greater his trials are, the more fervent his prayers will be. When they are presented through the sacrifice and intercession of the Saviour, they will be as acceptable to God as the daily sacrifices and burnings of incense were of old. Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice, it is the offering up of the soul, and its best affections. Prayer is of a sweet smelling savour to God, as incense, which yet had no savour without fire; nor has prayer without the fire of holy love and fervour.

David prays that he might not be surprised into any sinful words, ver. 3. Good men know the evil of tongue sins, and how prone they are to them. When enemies are provoking, we are in danger of carrying our resentments too far, and of speaking unadvisedly. He prays that he might not be inclined to any sinful practices, ver. 4. Whatever inclination there is in me to sin, let it be not only restrained, but mortified by Divine grace. The example of those about us, and the provocations of those against us, are apt to stir up, and draw out corrupt inclinations. While we live in such an evil world, and carry about with us such evil hearts, we have need to pray that we may neither be drawn by allurements, nor driven by provocation to do any sinful thing. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin; but they that consider how soon sin will turn into wormwood and gall, will dread those dainties, and pray to God by his providence to take them out of their sight, and by his grace to turn them against them. Good men will pray against even the sweets of sin.

2. The prayer of faith is acceptable to God, as the fragrance of incense is acceptable to man; and as the incense was offered in the morning and evening, so the spirit of this service is to be kept up at those times throughout all generations.—*Jones.*

Lifting up the hands was a prayer gesture, and a very ancient one both among Jews and Gentiles. Aristotle says, All, when we pray, lift up our hands to heaven.—*Gill.*

Ver. 5—10. David desires his friends would reprove him for that which was really amiss in him, ver. 5. We should ever be ready to welcome the rebukes of our righteous and heavenly Father, and also the reproofs of our brethren. We

should study to profit by the reproaches of our enemies, and by the severe rebukes of those who mean well, but are unskilful. No benefactors are more entitled to our gratitude than such reprovers, yet alas, flatterers are generally more favoured even by professing christians. Their reproof is an excellent oil, to cure the bruises sin has given me. It shall not break my head, if it may but help to break my heart. We must requite the kindness of those who deal thus faithfully, thus friendly, with us, at least by our prayers for them in their calamities; hereby we must show that we take it kindly.

David hopes his persecutors will, some time or other, hear to be told of their faults, as he was willing to be told of his, ver. 6. Some think this refers to the re-lentings that were in Saul's breast, when he said, with tears, Is this thy voice, my son David? 1 Sam. 24. 16; 26. 21. Or, we may take it more generally; those who make the greatest figure in this world, do not always meet with smooth ways through it. And those who slighted the word of God before, will be glad of it, when in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter, the word is sweet.

David complains of the great extremity to which he and his friends were reduced; Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth; they are as little regarded as chips among the hewers of wood: he casts himself upon God, and depends upon him for deliverance, ver. 7, 8. Those who look toward God, may have their hopes in him.

He prays that God would succour and relieve him as his necessity required. That he would comfort him; Leave not my soul desolate and destitute; still let me see where my help is. That he would prevent the designs of his enemies against him, ver. 9. That God would, in justice, turn the designs of his enemies upon themselves, and, in mercy, deliver him from being ruined by them, ver. 10. Let the wicked fall into their own net.

Let us then lift our prayer unto God. Let us put our trust in the Lord, that our souls may not be left destitute. Let us entreat him to rescue us from the snares of Satan, and of all the workers of iniquity, that we may escape and be blessed for ever, while the wicked fall into their own nets, and perish.

In language like this psalm, O Lord,

would we entreat that our poor prayers should set forth our only hope, our only dependence on thee. Grant us thy grace, that we may be habitually prepared for this employment, being clothed with thy righteousness, and having all the gifts of thy Spirit implanted in our hearts. Then shall the exercises of thy grace be manifested in the going forth of our souls in faith and supplication, in love and praise. Our eyes will still be looking unto the Lord, who will keep us from every snare, and at length bring us home to his heavenly kingdom.—(37.)

6. "Their judges have been dismissed in the sides of the rock, and have heard my words, that they were sweet." Their princes, or leaders, have been dismissed when I had them at an advantage, 1 Sam. 24. 3, and only heard me expostulate in such a manner that even Saul was overcome.—*Bp. Horne from Peters.*

PSALM CXLII.

This psalm is a prayer, the substance of which David offered up to God, when he was forced by Saul to take shelter in a cave. He complains against his persecutors; and expresses his confidence and joy in God.

There can be no situation so distressing or dangerous, in which faith will not fetch in comfort from God by fervent prayer. David did not prescribe to God, nor show him his trouble, as if God did not know it without his showing; but, as one that put his confidence in God, he humbly laid the matter before him, and then cheerfully left it with him. We are apt to show our trouble too much to ourselves, aggravating it, and poring upon it, which does us no service, whereas by showing it to God we might cast the care upon him who careth for us, and thereby ease ourselves. Nor should we allow of any complaint to ourselves or others, which we cannot, with sincerity of devotion, make to God.

When he made his complaint, he made his supplication. If he had gone out of his way, and met with snares, he might have thanked himself; but when he met with them in the way of his duty, he might with humble boldness tell God of them. In our greatest perplexities, when our spirits are overwhelmed by distress, and filled with discouragement; when we see snares laid for us on every side, while we walk in his way, we may reflect

with comfort that "the Lord knoweth our path."

David's life was exceedingly precious, and yet when he was unjustly proscribed, no man cared for it, nor would protect it. Herein he was a type of Christ, who, in his sufferings for us, was forsaken of all men, even of his own disciples, and trod the wine-press alone, for there was none to help, none to uphold, Isa. 63. 5. He then found satisfaction in God. Lovers and friends stood aloof from him, and it was in vain to call to them; But, said he, I cried unto thee, O Lord, who wilt not fail me nor forsake me when men do. David tells us what he said to God in the cave, Thou art my Refuge and my Portion in the land of the living; my Refuge to save me from being miserable, my Portion to make me happy. The cave I am in, is a poor refuge; Lord, thy name is the strong tower that I run into.

Those who in sincerity take the Lord for their God, shall find him all-sufficient, both as a Refuge and as a Portion, so that no evil shall hurt them, no good shall be wanting to them; every thing else is a refuge of lies, and a portion of no value. In this situation, he addressed himself to God. Lord, deliver me from my persecutors; restrain them, or rescue me. Lord, bring my soul out of prison; not only bring me safe out of this cave, but bring me out of all my perplexities. We may apply it spiritually; the souls of good men are often straitened by doubts and fears, fettered through the weakness of faith and the prevalence of corruption. And it is then their duty and interest to apply themselves to God, and beg of him to set them at liberty, that they may run the way of his commandments.

He expected his deliverance would redound to the glory of God. By his own thanksgivings; this is the greatest comfort of temporal mercies, that they furnish us with matter, and give us opportunity for the excellent duty of praise. And by the thanksgivings of many on his behalf, 2 Cor. 1. 11. They shall join with me in my thanksgivings, because thou shalt have dealt bountifully with me. The mercies of others ought to be the matter of our praises to God; and the praises of others, on our behalf, ought to be both desired and received in by us.

Thus the Lord delivered David from his powerful persecutors, and dealt

bountifully with him. Thus he raised the crucified Redeemer from the prison of the grave to the throne of glory, and made him Head over all things for his church. Thus the convinced sinner, when every other refuge fails, and he is shut up under sin, cries for help, and is brought forth to praise the Lord, in the company of his redeemed people, and thus every believer will at length be delivered from this evil world, from sin and death, that the whole company may rejoice together, and praise their God and Saviour for evermore. ~

PSALM CXLIII.

This psalm contains, (1.) David earnestly deprecating God's judgments, complaining of his enemies and distresses, and meditating on the works of God with earnest prayer, ver. 1—6. (2.) He fervently prays for comfort, guidance, quickening, and deliverance, and for the destruction of his enemies, ver. 7—12.

Ver. 1—6. David humbly begs to be heard, and that God would give judgment in his faithfulness and righteousness. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, and therefore must plead God's righteousness, the word of promise which he has freely given us, and caused us to hope in. His petition is, Enter not into judgment with thy servant; do not deal with me in strict justice, as I deserve to be dealt with. David, before he prays for the removal of his trouble, prays for the pardon of his sin, and depends upon mere mercy alone for it.

He complains of the prevalence of his enemies against him; Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. He bemoans the oppression of his mind, occasioned by his outward troubles. He applies himself to the use of proper means for the relief of his troubled spirit. In order to this, he looks back, and remembers God's former appearances for his afflicted people, and for him in particular. This has been often a relief to the people of God in their straits, to think of the wonders which their fathers told them of, 77. 5, 11. He looks round, and takes notice of the works of God in the creation, and the government of the world. Many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power, and goodness in them, and therefore do not receive the benefit they might by

them. I muse on, or as some read it, I discourse of the operation of thy hands. The more we consider the power of God, the less we shall fear the face or force of man, Isa. 51. 12, 13. He looks up with earnest desires toward God and his favour. This is the best course we can take when our spirits are overwhelmed; justly do they sink under their load, who will not take such a ready way as this to ease themselves.

The believer has not only the faithfulness, but the righteousness of God engaged in his behalf, because he is made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. 1. 30. Much more then may he be confident in the matters between him and his persecutors. But he will not forget, that in his best actions he is a sinner, and cannot be justified by his own obedience. This will keep him a humble penitent, crying for mercy, living by faith, and perceiving the preciousness of Christ, more and more, to the end of his days. What will be the presumption and delusion of those who despise free grace, and expect heaven as the wages of their scanty formal services!

The justified believer, having peace with God, must expect the enmity of the world, and the temptations of Satan. He would cause us to indulge despondency and hard thoughts of God, and to dwell in darkness as if cast off to perish. But meditation and prayer will recover us from these distresses; and then the mourning soul strives to return to the Lord, as the infant stretches out its hands to an indulgent mother, and thirsts for his consolations as the parched ground for refreshing rain.

6. See note, 1 Kings 18. 5.

Ver. 7—12. David here tells us what he said when he stretched forth his hands unto God; Hear me speedily. It was not a haste of unbelief, but of vehement desire and holy love. He prays for the manifestations of God's favour; that God would be well pleased with him, and let him know that he was so; this he prefers before any good. He pleads the wretchedness of his case, if God withdrew from him. Even those who through grace are delivered from going down to the pit, sometimes, when the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against them, look like those who are going to the pit. If the imminent peril of death renders men

vehement in calling for speedy relief, much more will the believer call upon God to hear him speedily. But the night of distress and discouragement shall usher in a morning of consolation and praise. He entreats God's favour; Cause me to hear thy loving kindness; cause me to hear it in the morning, every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's loving kindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirit all the day long. He pleads, For in thee do I trust, and in thee only; I look not for comfort in any other.

He is as earnest for the operations of God's grace in him, as for the tokens of God's favour to him, and so should we be. He prays that he might be enlightened with the knowledge of God's will; and this is the first work of the Spirit. Sometimes those that are much in care to walk aright, are in doubt, and in the dark, which is the right way. Let them come boldly to the throne of grace, and beg of God, by his word, and Spirit, and providence, to show them the way, and prevent their missing it. A good man does not ask the way in which is the most pleasant walking, but what is the right way, the way in which he should walk. Not only show me what thy will is, but teach me how to do it. It is the desire and endeavour of all God's faithful servants to know and do his will, and to stand complete in it. If we do in sincerity take God for our God, we may depend upon him to teach us to do his will. Lead me into the land of uprightness, into the communion of saints, into a settled course of holy living, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness, where holiness will be in perfection. We cannot find the way that will bring us to that land, unless God show us; nor go in that way, unless he take us by the hand and lead us. The plea is, Thy Spirit is good, and able to make me good. Let thy good Spirit lead me, so some read it. Those who have the Lord for their God, have his Spirit for their Guide; it is their character and privilege, that they are led by the Spirit.

He prays that he might be enlivened to do God's will. The best saints often find themselves dull, and dead, and slow, and therefore pray to God to quicken them. For thy righteousness' sake, bring my soul out of trouble; for thy promise sake, nay, for thy mercy sake. And the more we are slandered and persecuted, the more fervently should we pray that we may not

only find peace and comfort, but that by well doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. The enemies of God's people are the enemies of the Lord also. In mercy to their souls he will cut off all that afflict and injure them. But we should especially seek the destruction of our sins, our worst enemies, that we may be more devotedly God's servants; and his righteousness and mercy will unite to induce him to answer our prayers for deliverance. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter destruction of all the impenitent enemies of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, who will not have him to reign over them, and who afflict his people, in whose afflictions he is afflicted.

PSALM CXLIV.

In this psalm, David, (1.) Acknowledges, with triumph and thankfulness, the great goodness of God to him in advancing him to the government, ver. 1—4. He prays to God to help him against the enemies who threatened him, ver. 5—8. (2.) He rejoices in the assurance of victory over them, ver. 9, 10. He prays for the prosperity of his own kingdom, and rejoices in the hopes of it, ver. 11—15.

Many verses in this psalm are very similar to those in other psalms, particularly the eighteenth.

Ver. 1—8. When men become eminent for things to which they were not regularly educated, and for which they have had but very few advantages, they should be more deeply sensible that God hath been their Teacher. Though courage, military skill, and success therein are gifts of the Creator, yet they are seldom so employed as to warrant the use of these words, He teacheth. Too generally the great murderer instigates ambitious men to destroy their fellow-creatures without a cause. Happy those whom the Lord teaches to fight the good fight of faith, and gives that noblest victory, conquest of and dominion over their own spirits.

A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy. David gives to God the glory of two things.

1. What he was to him. He is my Strength, from whom I have power both for my work and for my warfare; my Rock to build on, and to take shelter in. Even when we are weak, we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. My Goodness; my chief Good, in whose

favour I place my felicity, and who is the Author of all the goodness that is in me. My Fortress, and my high Tower, in whom I think myself as safe as in a castle or strong-hold. My Deliverer; a deliverer, who is always nigh unto me, and makes all my deliverances turn to my real benefit. My Shield; not only my Fortress at home, but my Shield in the field of battle. Wherever a believer goes, he carries Divine protection along with him.

2. What God had done for him. He subdueth my people under me, ver. 2. There was a special power of God inclining the people of Israel to be subject to David, pursuant to the promise God had made him; it was typical of that great act of Divine grace, the bringing of souls into subjection to the Lord Jesus, and making them willing in the day of his power.

He admires God's condescension to man, and to himself in particular, ver. 3. 4. Lord, what is man, that thou hast such a tender regard to any of that mean and worthless race, as thou hast had to me! Considering the disgrace that human nature lies under, we have reason to admire the honours God has put upon mankind in general, and upon the Messiah, to whom those words are applied, Heb. 2. 6. He illustrates it by considering the meanness and mortality of man, notwithstanding the dignity put upon him, ver. 4; so frail is he, so weak, so helpless, compassed about with so many infirmities, and his continuance here so very short and uncertain, that he is like to vanity itself. His days have little substance in them, considering how many thoughts and cares of an immortal soul are employed about a poor dying body. They are as a shadow, dark and fitting, transitory, and when the sun sets, resolving itself into all shadow. They are as a shadow that passeth away, and there is no loss of it.

In their highest earthly exaltation, believers will recollect how mean, sinful, and vile they are in themselves; and will be the more filled with admiring gratitude for the Lord's condescension and regard to them: thus they will be preserved from self-importance and presumption.

He begs of God to strengthen him, and give him success against the enemies that invaded him, ver. 5—8. That he would appear against them. That he would appear for him. God's time to help his

people is, when they are sinking, and all other helps fail.

He who bows the heavens and comes down, who touches the mountains and causes them to remove, can find innumerable ways to scatter his most powerful foes, and deliver his people from threatening dangers. While in our duty we may depend upon him; when our enemies are impious and infidel, our encouragement to hope in him may increase.

1. Many of the versions render it, My God; the word rock is so used for God, Deut. 32. 30, 31.

2. Or, the people, the heathen people; this may be typical of the subduing of Christ's people under him.—*Gill*.

4. Or, "Man is like to a vapour," the breath which proceedeth from the mouth.

Ver. 9—15. David praises God for the experiences he enjoyed of his goodness to him, and the encouragements he had to expect further mercy from him, ver. 9, 10. Fresh favours call for fresh returns of thanks; nay, we must praise God for the mercies we hope for by his promise, as well as those we have received by his providence, 2 Chron. 20. 20, 21. He giveth temporal deliverances to kings, and he alone can give eternal salvation, which they need as much as the meanest subjects. To be saved from the hurtful sword, or from wasting sickness, without deliverance from the dominion of sin and the wrath to come, is but a small advantage. This may refer to Christ the Son of David, and then it is a new song indeed, a new testament song; God delivered him from the hurtful sword, upheld him as his servant, and brought him off a Conqueror over all the powers of darkness, Isa. 42. 1. To him he gave salvation, not for himself only, but for us, raising him up to be the Author of salvation.

He prays for the continuance of God's favour, that he might be delivered from the public enemies, ver. 11, and that he might see the public peace and prosperity; Lord, let us have victory, that we may have quietness; which we shall never have while our enemies have power to do us mischief. David, as a king, here speaks the earnest desire he had of the welfare of his people; therein he was a type of Christ, who provides effectually for the good of his chosen.

The particular instances of that public prosperity which David desired for his people are stated, ver. 12—15. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world, to see their children

likely to do well. To see them as plants, not as weeds, not as thorns; to see them as plants growing, not withered and blasted; to see them healthful, quick, towardly, and especially of a pious inclination, likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day; to see them, in their youth, their growing time, increasing in every thing that is good, till they grow strong in spirit. By daughters families are united, to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones; and when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief Corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, polished, purified, and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them. Not when they are only polished with outward beauty and embellishments, and superficial accomplishments, but when possessed of that adorning which the word of God most recommends.

He desired plenty, which is to be desired, that, having abundance, we may be thankful to God, generous to our friends, and charitable to the poor; otherwise, what profit is it to have our garners full? Jam. 5. 3. Increase is a blessing in which God is to be acknowledged.

Also uninterrupted peace. War brings with it abundance of mischiefs, whether it be offensive or defensive. That there be no oppression or faction, no complaining in our streets; that the people may have no cause to complain, nor may complain without cause.

Happy are the people that are in such a case, ver. 15; but it is seldom so, and never long so; yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord. National piety commonly brings national prosperity; for nations, as such, in their national capacity, are capable of rewards and punishments only in this life. And in proportion as we do not adhere to the worship and service of God, we cease to be a happy people, notwithstanding outward advantages. Yea, rather, happy are the people whose God is the Lord, who have his favour, and love, and grace, according to the covenant, though they have not abundance of this world's goods. All this, and much more, cannot make us happy, unless the Lord be our God; if he be, the want of this cannot make us miserable.

The subjects of the Saviour, the Son of David, share the blessings of his authority and victories, and are a happy people,

because they have the Lord for their God. They dwell among the ungodly as among strange children, desiring to be preserved from the evil of their example. Their happiness is not placed in outward prosperity or in flourishing families, while they earnestly endeavour that their children may be planted in the Lord, and be parts of his spiritual temple. They pray that the number of christians may increase as flocks in fertile pastures, that they who labour in the word and doctrine may be strong in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the church may be in peace and prosper, without any divisions or murmurings to disgrace or weaken the cause of christianity. These objects let us all keep in view, for happy is the people that hath the Lord for their God.

11. When a solemn oath was taken, it was usual to lift up the right hand to heaven, to signify that the person called God to witness the truth of his assertion.

13, 14. Or, in our open pastures or fields, as Job 5. 10.

PSALM CXLV.

David, (1.) Resolves to praise God, and excites others to join him, extolling the greatness, power, goodness, and mercy of the Lord, ver. 1—10. (2.) He extols the glory of God's kingdom, and the bounty of his providence, ver. 11—16. Also his justice and holiness; his regard to the prayers of the upright, his care of those that love him, and his vengeance upon the wicked, ver. 17—21.

From this psalm to the end of the book we find unmixed praise and thanksgiving, without any complaint.

Ver. 1—9. Those who, under troubles and temptations, abound in fervent prayer, shall in due season abound in grateful praise, which is the genuine language of holy joy. We can never sufficiently extol our God and King; we should therefore make new efforts to bless his name every day; and we may be thus employed for ever without exhausting the subject. We should always be communicating to our children what we have learned of God's perfections, and, whether our sphere be limited or extensive, we should ever be stirring up others to speak of his power. Especially we should speak of his wondrous work of redemption, while we declare his greatness. For neither Egypt's plagues, nor the destruction of the Canaanites, so proclaim the justice of God, as the cross

of Christ exhibits it to the enlightened mind.

All God's goodness is great goodness, the treasures of it can never be exhausted; they can never be lessened, for he ever will be rich in mercy. It is memorable goodness; it is what we ought always to have in mind, for it is worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance. We should utter, we should abundantly utter it, as those who are very full of it, and desire that others may be acquainted and affected with it. But whenever we utter God's great goodness, we must not forget, at the same time, to sing of his righteousness; for he is righteous in punishing those that rebel against him.

Although we should desire that sinners should know the terror of the Lord, that they may flee from the wrath to come, we should more aim to lead them into the experience of his mercy; for in salvation by Christ, we perceive that a just God is also gracious, full of compassion, and slow to anger. Even impenitent sinners, on earth, are living monuments of his patience and his goodness to his enemies.

It may be truly said of our Lord Jesus Christ, that his words are words of grace; his gospel and the doctrines of it are doctrines of grace; his works are works of grace, all flowing from his wondrous grace and mercy. He is full of compassion; hence he came into the world to save sinners, and in his pity redeemed them. When on earth, he showed his compassion both to the bodies and souls of men, by healing the one, and instructing the other. Of great mercy, a merciful High Priest, typified by the mercy-seat, where we may find grace and mercy at all times, through whom God is merciful to sinners, and to whose mercy we are to look for eternal life.—(27.)

Ver. 10—21. All God's works show forth his praises; but saints bless his name with joyful hearts, and render him the reasonable service of love and gratitude. Being brought into his kingdom, as exercised by the Divine Redeemer, they delight to discourse of his glory, and to talk of his power. Fain would they make known his mighty acts to all the sons of men, that they may no longer refuse submission to a Prince so gracious. All creatures wait upon him, and are satisfied in due season; and he saith to the believing poor, Your Father knoweth your need.

The inferior creatures indeed have not the knowledge of God, nor are capable of it, and yet they are said to wait upon God, because they seek their food according to the instinct which the God of nature has put into them. He satisfies the desire of every living thing, except some of the unreasonable children of men, who will be satisfied with nothing.

He does good to all the children of men; his own people in a special manner. He upholds all that fall. Many of the children of men are brought very low by sickness and other distresses, yet Providence wonderfully upholds them. Many of the children of God, who have been ready to fall into sin, to fall into despair, have experienced his goodness in preventing their falls, or recovering them speedily by his graces and comforts, so that though they fell, they were not utterly cast down.

If those who were bowed down by oppression and affliction are raised up, it was God that raised them. And with respect to all those that are heavy laden under the burden of sin, if they come to Christ by faith, he will ease them, he will raise them. He is very ready to hear and answer the prayers of his people.

He is not only nigh unto them in relation, being their near Kinsman, Brother, Father, Husband, and Head, but with respect to place and presence; and that not only in a general way, as he is present every where, but in a special way he is so nigh to them as he is not to others, Deut. 4. 7. He is in their hearts, and dwells there by faith, and they dwell in him. His blood is sprinkled upon their consciences, and his righteousness is unto them and upon them; he is nigh to those that call upon him, for Christ is equally called upon as the Father, to give what they ask, and to help in all time of need, 1 Cor. 1. 2; Acts 7. 59; 22. 16.—(27.)

He will not only be nigh to them, that they may have the satisfaction of being heard, but he will fulfil their desires; they shall have what they ask, and find what they seek. It was said, ver. 16, that he satisfies the desire of every living thing; much more will he fulfil the desire of them that fear him. He will hear their call, and will save them from the horn of the unicorn, 22. 21. The proviso is very reasonable; he will hear and help us, if we fear him, if we worship and serve him; if we call upon him in truth; for he desires that in the inward part. In all de-

votions, inward impressions must be answerable to the outward expressions, else they are not performed in truth.

And having taught men to love his name and holy ways, he will preserve them from the destruction of the wicked, who shall perish for ever. May we then fear his wrath, and seek his grace; may we love his name, and walk in his ways. Then shall we speak from a full heart, while our lips utter his praises, and while we desire that all flesh should bless his holy name, for ever and ever.

This is an alphabetic psalm, and the verse, beginning with the letter *nun*, which should come between ver. 13 and 14, is wanting in the Hebrew copies, except in one manuscript, where it is as follows: "Jehovah is faithful in all his words, and merciful in all his works." This agrees with the Greek and other ancient versions.

PSALM CXLVI.

In this excellent psalm of praise, (1.) The psalmist engages to praise God, ver. 1, 2. He shows why we should not trust in men, ver. 3, 4. (2.) Why we should trust in God, ver. 5. Because of his power in the kingdom of nature, ver. 6, his dominion in the kingdom of providence, ver. 7, and his grace in the kingdom of the Messiah, ver. 8, 9, that everlasting kingdom, ver. 10, to which many of the Jewish writers refer this psalm.

Ver. 1—4. If we desire to praise the Lord while we live, as our most delightful occupation, we shall certainly praise him to all eternity! With these glorious prospects before us, how low do the pursuits of ambition or worldly connexions seem to us, and how needful it is to dissuade men from this idolatry! That which is the great end of our being, ought to be our great employment and delight, while we have any being; In this must our time and powers be spent.

The fickleness, jealousies, selfishness, and weakness of man, render all dependence on princes, as to this world, delusive. But though we suppose them wise and good as David himself, yet we must not be too sure of their ability and continuance; for they are sons of Adam, weak and mortal. There is indeed a Son of man in whom there is help, in whom there is salvation, and who will not fail those that trust in him. But all other sons of men are like the man they are sprung of, who, being in honour, did not

abide. If he who is called the son of man, were not also the Son of God, he would be included among those we are not to trust in, Jer. 17. 5—8; but, on the contrary, all the particulars recorded in the latter part of the psalm were fulfilled in and by him.

The earth God has given to the children of men; great striving there is about it, and, as a mark of authority, men call their lands by their own names, 49. 11. But, after a while, no part of the earth will be their own, except that in which the dead body makes its bed. But when man returns to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish; all the projects and designs he had, vanish and are gone; all his purposes are cut off and buried with him, Job 17. 11. And then what comes of expectations from him? Princes are mortal, as well as other men, and therefore we cannot have that assurance of help from them which we may have from that Potentate who hath immortality. Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and will not be there long.

Ver. 5—10. The psalmist, having cautioned us not to trust in princes, here encourages us to put our confidence in God, because, if we do so, we shall be happily secured. Those shall have God for their Help, who take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly. Who have their hope in him, live in dependence upon him, have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other supports fail. We must hope in the providence of God, for all the good things we need, which relate to the life that now is; and in the grace of Christ, for all the good things which relate to the life that is to come.

He cannot want power to bless, who made the heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is; and his goodness shines in every part of the government of his providence. And the God of heaven assumes our human flesh, that he might become our salvation! The eternal and coequal Son of God becomes the Son of man to bring effectual help to us. And though he died upon the cross for our sins, and was laid in the grave, yet his thoughts of love to us did not perish; he rose again to accomplish them; he reigneth in Zion, her Lord and King to all generations.

When in his state of humiliation on

earth, to show that he was the Creator and Lord of all, he rescued those who were oppressed by Satan, and executed judgment on the oppressor. He created food to bestow on hungering multitudes; he opened the eyes of the blind, he raised up those who were bowed down with disease, and showed himself the effectual friend of the widow and the destitute.

All this was only a specimen of what he is still doing every day. He continually grants deliverance to the captives who are bound in the chains of sin and Satan; and we may take encouragement to hope in him for that spiritual liberty which he came to proclaim, Isa. 61. 1, 2. He opens the eyes of the understanding, and has often given to his afflicted people to see that comfort which before they were not aware of, and encourages us to hope in him for spiritual illumination. He raises up those who are bowed down by distress of soul. He feeds with the bread of life those who hunger for salvation; he is the constant friend of the poor in spirit, the helpless and destitute. He loveth the righteous, those whose righteousness is in and from him; but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. While he does all these things by his grace, his providence orders all things for their good who trust in him, and love him. Our Lord Jesus showed his love to the righteous, by fulfilling all righteousness.

He has a tender concern for those that stand in special need of his care; The Lord preserveth the strangers. Many a poor stranger has found the benefit of the Divine protection, and been kept alive by it. Widows and fatherless children often fall into the hands of those that will do them wrong; but the Lord relieveth them, and raiseth up friends for them: see Exod. 22. 22, 23. Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless; to receive Gentiles, strangers, into his kingdom; with him poor sinners, that are as fatherless, may find mercy, Hos. 14. 3.

His kingdom shall continue to the utmost ages of eternity. Christ's kingdom shall continue in an endless glory; it shall stand for ever. It is matter of unspeakable comfort, that the Lord reigns as Zion's God, as Zion's King, that the Messiah is Head over all things to the church, and will be so while the world stands. Then let sinners flee to him, and let believers rejoice in him. And as the

Lord shall reign for ever, let us excite each other to praise his holy name.

10. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; of his government and the peace of it there will be no end. He is King of saints now, and reigns in their hearts, and in his churches, and in the world; and he will reign with his people, and they with him: see Ps. 45. 6; Isa. 9. 7; Dan. 2. 44. He who is Zion's God, is Zion's King, Head over all things to the church; and this is her joy and comfort in every age, that her God and King reigns, and will reign for evermore; and especially in a glorious manner at the latter day, Isa. 52. 7. And as all this serves to encourage saints to make him their help and hope, so it is matter of praise and thanksgiving.—*Gill*

PSALM CXLVII.

In this psalm the people of God are exhorted to praise him for the mercies vouchsafed to them, ver. 1—6, for his wisdom, power, and goodness, 7—9, and for his providential care, 10, 11. (2) For the wonderful salvation wrought by his arm, 12—14, for the security, increase, and prosperity of the church, 15—18, for the happy change in her condition, and for the glorious privilege of the Divine word, revealed, and committed to her, ver. 19, 20.—(32.)

Ver. 1—11. The duty of praise is recommended to us. It is not without reason, that we are called to it again and again. Praising God is work that is its own wages, what we should be in, as in our element. It is comely, it becomes us as reasonable creatures, much more as people in covenant with God. God is recommended to us as the proper Object of our most exalted praises.

Observe the care he takes of his chosen people, ver. 2. Is Jerusalem to be raised out of small beginnings? Is it to be recovered out of its ruins by gathering his people from their captivities? In both cases, The Lord builds up Jerusalem. The gospel-church, the Jerusalem that is from above, is of his building; he adds to it daily such as shall be saved, and so increases it. He will build it up unto perfection, build it up as high as heaven. Are any of his people outcasts? Have they made themselves so by their own folly? He gathers them by giving them repentance. Have they been forced out? He opens a door for their return; many that were missing, and thought to be lost, are brought back, and they that were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, are gathered together again. He gathers

poor outcast sinners by his grace, and will bring them at length into his holy habitation in heaven.

See the comforts he has laid up for true penitents, ver. 3. They are broken in heart, and wounded, humbled, and troubled, for sin, inwardly pained at the remembrance of it, as a man is, that is sorely wounded. To those whom God heals with the consolations of his Spirit, he speaks peace, assures them their sins are pardoned, and that he is reconciled to them, pours the balm of Gilead into their bleeding wounds, and then binds them up, and makes them to rejoice. And for this, let others praise him also. The contrast between the majesty and mercy of our God, should never be overlooked.

He has sovereign dominion over the lights of heaven; all their motions are under his direction, ver. 4. This is one instance of many, to show that great is our Lord and of great power; he can do what he pleases, and of his understanding there is no computation, so that he can direct every thing for the best. Man's knowledge is soon ended; but God's knowledge is a depth that can never be fathomed.

While he telleth the number of the stars, he condescends to hear the poor broken-hearted sinner, and by his consolations to heal the wounded spirit. He crushes the haughtiest and most mighty, yet he lifts up the meek from their dejection and abject misery, to the comfort of his favour here, and to glory hereafter. While he feeds the young ravens he gives a pledge that he will not leave his praying people destitute.

Though he is so great as to command the stars, he forgets not even the fowls, ver. 8, 9. Observe in what method he feeds man and beast. He covereth the heaven with clouds, which intercept the beams of the sun, and in them he prepareth that rain for the earth which is necessary to its fruitfulness. Clouds look melancholy, and yet without them we could have no rain, and consequently no fruit. Thus afflictions, for the present, look black, and dark, and unpleasant, and we are in heaviness because of them; but from these clouds of affliction come showers that make the harvest to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, Heb. 12. 11, which should reconcile us to them. Observe the necessary dependence the earth has upon the heavens, which directs us on earth to depend on God in

heaven. All the rain with which the earth is watered, is of God's preparing. He delights not in things wherein sinners confide and glory, but his delight is in those who conscientiously fear and serve him, hoping in his mercy alone for pardon and acceptance.

God is pleased to own the strength of grace; a serious and suitable regard to God, is, in his sight, of very great price. The Lord accepts of, and takes pleasure in, all those that fear him, and all that hope in his mercy. In the same heart, at the same time, there must be both a reverence of God's majesty, and a complacency in his goodness; both a believing dread of his wrath, and a believing expectation of his favour. Not that we hang in suspense between hope and fear, but act under the gracious influences of hope and fear united.

4. The immense distance at which the nearest stars are known to be placed, proves that they are bodies of a prodigious size, not inferior to our own sun, and that they shine, not by reflected rays, but by their own native light. But bodies encircled with such resplendent splendour, would be of little use in Jehovah's empire unless surrounding worlds were cheered by their benign influence and enlightened by their beams. Every star is therefore concluded to be a sun surrounded by planetary globes. Nearly a thousand of these luminaries may be seen in a clear winter night by the naked eye. But these do not form the eighty-thousandth part of what may be descried by the help of telescopes. While Dr. Herschel was exploring the most crowded parts of the milky way, "in one quarter of an hour's time no less than 116,000 stars passed through the field of view of his telescope." It has been computed that nearly one hundred millions of stars might be perceived by our most perfect instruments if all the regions of the sky were thoroughly explored. But immeasurable regions of space lie beyond the utmost boundaries of human vision even thus assisted, into which imagination itself can scarcely penetrate, but which are, doubtless, filled with operations of Divine wisdom and omnipotence.—*Dick*.

Ver. 12—20. The church, like Jerusalem of old, erected and preserved by the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, is exhorted to praise him for all the benefits and blessings vouchsafed to her.—(32.)

When the Lord speaks, all nature is obedient. At his command the snow and hoar frost cover the earth. Nothing can withstand his congealing cold, the works of men are suspended, nor can any human power remove the obstruction. But when he again gives the word, all reverts to its former course. Let us then consider how unable we are to stand before the indignation of the Lord. Let us be thankful if he

renders us free from the miseries some endure from an inclement season, and learn to contribute liberally to their relief. Let us also expect from his power things impracticable to others.

This thawing word may represent the gospel of Christ, and this thawing wind the Spirit of Christ; for the Spirit is compared to the wind, John 3. 8. Both are sent for the melting of frozen souls; converting grace softens the heart that was hard, and melts it into tears of repentance, and makes good affections to flow, which, before, were chilled and stopped up. The change which the thaw makes, is universal, and yet gradual; it is very evident, and yet how it is done, is unaccountable. Such is the change wrought in the conversion of a soul, when God's word and Spirit are sent to melt it and restore it to itself.

That word the effects of which upon the soul are similar to those experienced by nature in the season of spring—that word was showed unto Jacob, and became the property of Israel, while Israel continued to be the church of God, ver. 19. It has since, with all its types realized, and its prophecies accomplished in Jesus, been made over to the christian church. It is that peculiar blessing which distinguishes her from the rest of the world, and for which her children at all times are bound to praise the Lord.—(32.)

15. In the figurative language of the scriptures, whirlwinds are termed the commandment and word of the Lord.—*T. H. Horne.*

PSALM CXLVIII.

This psalm is a most solemn and earnest call to all creatures, according to their capacity, to praise their Creator, and to show forth his eternal power and Godhead, the invisible things of which are manifested in the things that are seen.

(1.) He calls upon the creatures that are placed in the upper world, to praise the Lord, both those that are intellectual, ver. 1, 2, and those that are not, ver. 3—6. (2.) He calls upon the creatures of this lower world, both those that can only minister matter of praise, ver. 7—10, and those that, being endued with reason, are capable of offering up this sacrifice, ver. 11—13, especially his own people, who have more cause, and are more concerned to do it, than any other, ver. 14.

Ver. 1—6. We, in this dark and de-

pressed world, know but little of the world of light and exaltation; and can scarcely form any conceptions of the vast regions above. But we know that there is above us a world of blessed angels by whom God is praised, an innumerable company of them; Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him. It is his glory that he has such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needs them, nor is, nor can be, any way benefited by them. To that bright and happy world the psalmist here refers, ver. 1, 2. We must lift up our souls above the world, unto God in the heavens, and on things above we must set our affections. It is his desire that God may be praised from the heavens, that from the inhabitants of that world we may learn this blessed work. But what is meant by the psalmist's calling upon them to praise God? They do not need it, for they are continually praising God, therefore we here desire God may be praised in the best manner, also we show that we have communion with spirits above, who are still praising him; and that we are come by faith, and hope, and holy love, to the innumerable company of angels, Heb. 12. 22. There is above us not only an assembly of blessed spirits, but a system of vast bodies too, and those, bright ones, in which God is praised.

The heavens through all their boundless regions, with the luminaries contained in them, and the waters sustained by them, by their motions and influences, all regulated according to the will of their Maker, in a very forcible manner declare the glory of God. They call upon us that both by word and deed we glorify with them the Creator and Redeemer of the universe.—(32.)

Ver. 7—14. Even in this world, dark and bad as it is, God is praised; Praise ye the Lord from the earth, ver. 7. As the rays of the sun, which are darted directly from heaven, are reflected back, though more weakly, from the earth; so should the praises of God, with which this cold and infected world should be warmed. Out of the depths God may be praised as well as prayed unto. Men who do not praise the Lord are more ungovernable than the monsters of the deep, the raging sea itself, the stormy wind, or the devouring flame. The powers and operations

of nature, be they ever so strong, so stormy, they fulfil God's word, and do that, and no more than that he appoints them. Christ showed himself to have Divine power, when he commanded even the winds and the seas, and they obeyed him. Those that will not fulfil God's word, but rise up in rebellion against it, show themselves to be more violent and headstrong than even the stormy winds, for they fulfil it. View the surface of the earth, ver. 9, mountains and all hills; from the barren tops of some, and the fruitful tops of others, we may fetch matter for praise. There are plants, some that are exalted by their usefulness, as the fruitful trees of various kinds, for the fruits of which God is to be praised; others by their stateliness, as all cedars, those trees of the Lord, 104. 16. Pass next to the animal kingdom, and there we find God glorified, even by the beasts that run wild, and all cattle that are tame and in the service of man, ver. 10. Nay, even the creeping things are not sunk so low, nor do the flying fowl soar so high, as not to be called upon to praise the Lord. Much of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, appears in the several capacities and instincts of the creatures, in the provision made for them, and the use made of them. Surely we cannot but acknowledge God with wonder and thankfulness.

Much more creatures that are dignified with the powers of reason, ought to employ themselves in praising God. Let all manner of persons praise God. Those of each rank, high and low; the praises of kings, and princes, and judges, are demanded. Those on whom God has put honour, must honour him with it. Yet the praises of the people are expected also, and God will graciously accept of them; Christ despised not the hosannas of the multitude. Alas! how little do any of us feel, or express, of this fervent spirit of adoring love and gratitude. But our prayers that His kingdom may come, his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, will not be always unanswered; for all kings shall yet fall down before God our Saviour, all nations shall do him service. In the mean time let us show that we are his saints by praising his name continually.

A good reason is given, ver. 13, why all should praise the name of the Lord; because his name alone is excellent, and

worthy to be praised. Let all the inhabitants both of earth and heaven praise him, and yet acknowledge his name to be exalted far above all blessing and praise. He is not only our Creator but our Redeemer; who hath made us a people near unto him, and will exalt us above all our enemies. His name only is excellent, and his glory is above the earth and heaven. The blessing is now come upon the Gentiles, through Christ, for they that were afar off, by his blood, are made nigh, Eph. 2. 13. Some by the horn of his people understand David, as a type of Christ, whom God has exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, who is indeed the praise of all his saints, and will be so for ever; for it is through him that they are a people near to God.

In redemption, those infinite excellences and that unspeakable glory are displayed which form the source of all our hopes and joys. While sinners are invited to draw near unto our reconciled God, his believing people are called to rejoice in him. With such a subject and such obligations what words can be enough expressive, what affections sufficiently ardent! May the Lord pardon and accept our languid praises; and teach our hearts to love him more, and praise him better, that we may be prepared to join the adorations of the heavenly world.

PSALM CXLIX.

The foregoing psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator; this is one to the Redeemer. It is a psalm of triumph in the God of Israel, and over the enemies of Israel. It looks further, to the kingdom of the Messiah. To him, and his graces and glories, we must have regard in this psalm, which speaks, (1.) Abundance of joy to all the people of God, ver. 1—5. (2.) Abundance of terror to the proudest of their enemies, ver. 6—9.

This psalm belongs to the times of the Messiah; to the gospel dispensation, to the latter part of it, especially when Jews and Gentiles shall be converted; and when all will praise the Lord, as they will have reason for it.—(27.)

Ver. 1—5. New mercies continually demand new songs of praise, to be sung in the congregations of saints on earth and in heaven. Let Israel rejoice in his Makers, so it is in the original; for God

said, Let us make man; and in this, some think, is the mystery of the Trinity. And the children of Zion have not only to bless the God who made them, but to rejoice in him as having created them in Christ Jesus unto good works, and formed them saints as well as men. They should express their gratitude in every way of which they are capable; nor should they rejoice in his pardoning mercy alone, but in his just and merciful government. He is a King that rules by love, and therefore to be praised; for the Lord takes pleasure in his people; in their services, in their prosperity, in communion with them, and in the communications of his favour to them. He that is infinitely happy in himself, and to whose happiness no accession can be made, graciously condescends to take pleasure in his people, 147. 11. The Lord takes pleasure in his people; surely they should rejoice in Him as their portion and eternal recompense.

When the Lord has made sinners sensible of their wants and unworthiness, and rendered them willing to be taught, saved, and ruled by him; he will beautify them with salvation, he will clothe them with the robes of righteousness, adorn them with the graces of his Spirit, renew them to the beauty of holiness, and cause them to bear his image, reflect his glory, and rejoice in his happiness for ever. Let his saints rejoice in this hope, in the earnest of his glory. Let them employ their waking hours upon their beds in songs of praise. Let them rejoice even upon the bed of death, assured that they are going to eternal rest and glory.

5. Or upon the couches on which the eastern nations generally recline even at their meals.

5. The saints shall be joyful with glory; they shall sing aloud upon their beds (or places of rest.) 6. The high praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand. In ver. 5 the Hebrew verbs are in the future tense. In ver. 6 the original has no verb at all.—*Bp. Horne.*

Ver. 6—9. Some of God's servants of old were commissioned to execute vengeance according to his word, upon the heathen kings and nobles. They did not do it from personal revenge or earthly politics, but by commission from God, according to his direction, and in obedience to his command. But the honour intended for all the saints of God, consists in their final triumphs over the enemies of their salvation, and in being assessors with Christ in judgment, to concur in the sentence denounced upon

wicked men. But Christ never intended that his gospel should be propagated by fire and sword, or his righteousness by the wrath of man. When the high praises of God are in our mouths, with them we should have an olive branch of peace in our hands.

Let the high praises of God be in their mouths while they wield the two-edged sword of the word of God, together with the shield of faith, in their warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil. With this two-edged sword, believers fight against their own corruptions, and, through the grace of God, subdue and mortify them. The sin that had dominion over them, is crucified; self, that once sat king, is bound with chains, and brought into subjection to the yoke of Christ; the tempter is foiled and bruised under their feet. This honour have all the saints; for to whatever work or suffering they may be called upon earth, they shall be more than conquerors over the enemies of their souls, through the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony. When their salvation shall be completed, then the judgment written shall be executed on the haughtiest enemies of Christ and his church, and his servants shall behold, rejoice, and praise the Lord. The complete accomplishment of this will be in the judgment of the great day, when the Lord shall come with ten thousand of his saints. Vengeance shall then be executed upon the heathen, Ps. 9. 17, and punishments, everlasting punishments, upon the people, kings, and nobles, that cast away the bands and cords of Christ's government. Then shall be executed the judgment written.

Behold here Jesus and his gospel church, chiefly in her millennial state. He and his people mutually rejoice in each other—while they praise him he imparts the blessings of salvation to them; and while he goes forth in the chariots of salvation conquering sinners by his grace, or in his chariots of vengeance, to destroy his Jewish, heathen, and antichristian enemies, by their prayers and influence they work together with him.—(10.)

Several conjectures have been formed respecting the occasion of this triumphal song of praise, but it is probable that David composed it not long before his death, and that the Spirit of prophecy led him beyond the immediate occasion, to celebrate by anticipation the future triumphs of the church over all enemies, at the opening of the millennium, and after the general resurrection.—*Scott.*

PSALM CL.

The psalmist shows for what, and upon what account, God is to be praised, ver. 1, 2; how, and with what expressions of joy, God is to be praised, ver. 3—5; and that every one should praise the Lord, ver. 6.

We are here, with the greatest earnestness imaginable, excited to praise God. Observe whence this tribute of praise arises, and out of what part of his dominion it especially issues. 1. From his sanctuary, where he does, in a special manner, both manifest his glory, and communicate his grace. Praise God upon the account of his sanctuary, and the privileges which we enjoy by having that among us, Ezek. 37. 26. 2. From the firmament of his power; Praise him, because of his power and glory which appear in the firmament. Let those who have their dwelling in the firmament of his power, even the holy angels, lead in this good work.

Those who praise the Lord in his sanctuary above, will behold displays of his power and glory which we cannot now conceive. But the greatest of all his mighty acts is known in his earthly sanctuary; this forms the foundation of our hope, and the subject of our admiring gratitude. The glorious holiness, the excellent greatness, and the unfathomable love of our God are more displayed in man's redemption than in all his other works. Let us study this subject in preparation for the world of glory; and let us celebrate the praises of our God and Saviour for it, as far as we are able. And surely those expressions of joy and love which the psalmist has so earnestly recommended, cannot be unsuitable to the sacred work.

We are not concerned to inquire what instruments are here mentioned; it is enough that they were well known then: our concern is, to know that hereby is intimated how full the psalmist's heart was of the praises of God, and how desirous he was that this good work might go on. And that in serving God we should spare no cost or pains. The best music in God's ear is devout and pious affections. Praise God with strong faith; praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with entire confidence in Christ; praise him with believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with earnest desire

toward him, and full satisfaction in him; praise him by universal respect to all his commands; praise him by cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love, and solacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory.

Let every thing that has breath, praise the Lord. Some think that in every thing that has breath, we must include the inferior creatures, as Gen. 7. 22, all in whose nostrils was the breath of life. They praise God according to their capacity. Others think that the children of men only are meant; for into them God has in a more peculiar manner breathed the breath of life, and they are become living souls, Gen. 2. 7. Now that the gospel is ordered to be preached to every creature, to every human creature, it is required that every human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit, for, but to spend it in praising God? Let every one that breathes toward God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth his praises too. Since we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath, let us praise the Lord; and then we shall breathe our last with comfort.

The six last psalms are wholly taken up in praising God, and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer christians come to their end, the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think that this last psalm represents to us the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God. Prayers will there be swallowed up in everlasting praises; there will be no intermission in praising God, and yet no weariness. Hallelujahs for ever repeated, and yet still new. Let us often take pleasure in thinking what glorified saints are doing in heaven; what those are doing, whom we have been acquainted with on earth, but who are gone before us thither; and let it not only make us long to be among them, but quicken us to do the will of God on earth, as they do it that are in heaven.

8, 4, 5. The Hebrews themselves acknowledge they are unable to distinguish and describe the several sorts of musical instruments here mentioned. It may be observed that there is no better method of combating the mischievous effects proceeding from the abuse of music than applying it to its true and proper use—to celebrate the praises of Jehovah.—*Ep. Horne.*

THE PROVERBS.

The collection called the Proverbs of Solomon seems to have been arranged in the order in which we now have it by different hands; but it is not therefore to be concluded that they are not the productions of Solomon. Divine wisdom is here taught us by proverbs, or short sentences, which contain their whole design within themselves, and are not connected with one another. Teaching by proverbs was an ancient way of teaching, and it is a plain and easy way of teaching. Both David's devotions and Solomon's instructions are sententious, which may recommend that way of expression. It is also a very profitable way of teaching; and what more can be required to recommend this kind of composition to our notice than its adoption by the Holy Spirit, as the means of disseminating inspired knowledge? This book claims our reverence as an invaluable treasure of heaven-taught wisdom. These proverbs of Solomon were not merely a collection of the wise sayings that had been formerly delivered, as some have imagined, but were the dictates of the Spirit of God in Solomon, and are often quoted and alluded to, as such, in other parts of the bible; the canonical authority of no book in the Old Testament is better ratified by the evidence of quotations than that of the Proverbs. So that though Solomon was great, yet behold a greater than Solomon is here. We shall not here lose sight of Christ and his truths and precepts; but we should not endeavour to find all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel in every part of this book. And as we have no book so useful to us, in our devotions, as David's psalms, so have we none so serviceable to us, for the right ordering of our conduct, as Solomon's proverbs, which contain, in a little compass, a complete body of Divine ethics, politics, and economics, exposing every vice, recommending every virtue, and suggesting rules for the government of ourselves in every relation and condition. The wonderful love of God towards his church is declared in this book; for the sum and effect of the whole scripture is here set forth in brief sentences.

This book may be divided into four distinct parts, each of which is distinguished by an introduction and a change of style and manner. 1. The proem, or exordium, ch. 1—9, which is most sublime and truly poetical. 2. The proverbs of Solomon, ch. 10—22, 16, comprising short sententious declarations. 3. A miscellaneous collection of proverbs, principally relating to rich men and nobles, ch. 22, 17—ch. 24. 4. An appendix, comprising a collection of Solomon's proverbs made in the reign of Hezekiah, ch. 25—29, also ethical precepts delivered by Agur, ch. 30, and admonitions given to king Lemuel by his mother, ch. 31. They afford a noble specimen of the didactic poetry of the Hebrews, and much of the elegance and force discernible in Solomon's wise sayings is derived from their antithetic form; hence a careful attention to the parallelism will contribute to remove the obscurity in which some appear to be involved, as it often assists in clearing up doubtful readings. By parallelism is meant a certain equality, resemblance, or relationship, between the members of each period; so that in two lines or members of the same period, things shall answer to things, and words to words, as if fitted to each other by a kind of rule or measure; such is the general strain of the Hebrew poetry.

The subject of this book may be thus stated by way of paraphrase of the opening verses. 1. The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel. 2. Which treat of the knowledge of wisdom, of religion, and piety towards God, of instruction and moral discipline, of the understanding the words of prudence, that is, wise and prudent counsels. 3. Which treat of the attainment of instruction in wisdom, which wisdom is to be exhibited in the conduct of life, and consists in righteousness with regard to ourselves, in judgment, in observing the statutes and ordinances of God, and in equity with regard to our fellow-creatures. 4. Which treat of the giving to the simple sagacity to discover what is right, by supplying them with just principles, and correct views of virtue and vice; and to the young man knowledge, so that he need not err through ignorance; and discretion, so that by pondering well these precepts, he will not err through obstinacy. Take the proverbs of other nations, and we shall find great numbers founded upon selfishness, cunning, pride, injustice, national contempt, and animosities. The principles of the Proverbs of Solomon are piety, charity, justice, benevolence, and true prudence. Their universal purity proves their inspiration.—(10, 23, 36, 44, 58, 64. *Henry. Scott.*)

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1—6. *The use of the Proverbs.*

These are the proverbs of Solomon. When God imparts wisdom, and intrusts authority to the same persons, they have great advantages for communicating good instructions. But the inspiration of the Holy Spirit gives authority to the scriptures far beyond what they could derive from any human advantages of those employed in committing them to writing.

It is the design of every part of revelation to cause us to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, and to receive lessons of heavenly discretion, that we may pursue the noblest ends by the most effectual means, may learn to walk with God and amongst men, in justice, judgment, and equity.

The instructions here given are plain, and likely to benefit those who are sensible of their own ignorance, and their

need to be taught. And those who receive these instructions, in their light and power, will be made wise to know the sin they should avoid, the duty they should do, and to escape the tempter's wiles. If young people will take heed to their ways, according to Solomon's proverbs, they will soon gain knowledge and discretion.

The wise man will hear, and will always be a learner; he will therefore add to his treasure from every maxim in this book. No man has so much understanding but he may increase it; as he attains to the true interpretation of each proverb, and discovers the meaning of those words of the wise, which to the careless, superficial, and conceited, appear dark sayings.

Solomon speaks of the most important points of truth, and a greater than Solomon is here. Christ speaks by his word and by his Spirit. He opens the understandings of men that they may understand the scriptures. Christ is the word and the wisdom of God, and he is made to us wisdom. Let us depend upon him as our wisdom, that his Spirit may write in our hearts the things written in this book, so will our conversations be living commentaries on the proverbs of Solomon.—(46.)

6. Dark, or deep. The word used refers not so much to the obscurity, as to the importance or weight of the expression to which it relates.

Ver. 7—9. *An exhortation to fear God and obey parents.*

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; of all things that are to be known, this is most evident, that God is to be feared, to be revered, served, and worshipped; those know nothing, who do not know this. Those are fools, who do not fear God and value the scriptures; whatever they may pretend, they are really strangers and enemies to wisdom.

Fools are persons destitute of true wisdom, who follow their own inclinations without any regard to reason, or reverence for God.—(36.)

He takes it for granted, that parents will, with all the wisdom they have, instruct their children, and, with all the authority they have, give law to them for their good. They are reasonable creatures, and therefore we must not give them law without instruction; when we tell them *what* they must do, we must tell them *why*. But they are corrupt and wilful, therefore with the instruction there is need of a law.

He charges children to receive, and to retain the good lessons and laws of their parents. To receive them with readiness; "Hear the instruction." To retain them with resolution; "Forsake not their law."

The instructions and laws of thy parents, carefully observed and lived up to, shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head. Let Divine truths and commands be to us most honourable; let us value them, and be ambitious of them, and then they shall be so to us. Those are truly valuable, and shall be valued, who value themselves more by their virtue and piety than by their worldly wealth and dignity.

8. Teachers among the Hebrews and others were commonly called fathers, and their scholars their sons.—*Poole*.

Ver. 10—19. *An exhortation to avoid the enticings of sinners.*

Observe how industrious wicked people are to seduce others into the paths of the destroyer; sinners love company in sin; the angels that fell were tempters almost as soon as they were sinners. But they will have so much the more to answer for. How cautious young people should be; "Consent thou not." Do not say as they say, nor do as they do, or would have thee to do; have no fellowship with them.

To enforce this caution, he represents the fallacious reasonings which sinners use in their enticements, and the art which they use to beguile unstable souls. Come with us, ver. 11, let us have thy company; at first, they pretend to ask no more; but soon rise higher, ver. 14. Cast in thy lot among us; and let us resolve to live and die together. They propose the gratification of their cruelty. Who could imagine that human nature should degenerate so that it should be a pleasure to one man to destroy another!

And of their covetousness. They hope to get by it. See here the idea they have of worldly wealth. They call it precious substance; whereas it is neither substance, nor precious; it is a shadow, it is vanity, especially that which is got by robbery, Ps. 62. 10. It is the ruinous mistake of thousands, that they overvalue the wealth of this world, and look on it as precious substance. Those who trade with sin, promise themselves in vain that it will turn to a vast account.

Such is the corruption of our nature, that our foot is very prone to step into the path of sin, so that we must use necessary violence upon ourselves, to

refrain our foot from it, and check ourselves if at any time we take the least step towards it. Consider how pernicious their way is in its own nature. Their feet run to evil, to that which is displeasing to God and hurtful to mankind; they hasten to shed blood. The way of sin is down-hill; men cannot stop themselves, the longer they continue in it, the faster they run. Would young people shun temporal or eternal ruin, let them resolutely refuse to take one step in these destructive paths; for while they haste to obtain money to defray the expenses of licentiousness, their feet run to evil and they make haste to shed blood. Many are caught in their net, for whose ruin they have to answer.

They are plainly told that this wicked way will certainly end in their own destruction, and yet they persist in it. They are caught in Satan's net, which is spread before their eyes. The sinner sees ruin at the end of his way; the murderer, the thief, see the jail and the gallows before them, they might see hell before them, but they rush into sin, and rush on in it.

The stone they roll will turn upon themselves, ver. 18, 19. Their greediness of gain hurries them upon practices which will not suffer them to live out half their days. What is a man profited, though he gain the world, if he lose his life? For then he can enjoy the world no longer; much less if he lose his soul, and that be drowned in perdition, as multitudes are by the love of money.

Ver. 20—33. *The address of Wisdom to sinners; the misery of those who reject her counsels.*

Solomon, having showed how dangerous it is to hearken to the temptations of Satan, here declares how dangerous it is not to hearken to the calls of God.

God speaks to the children of men by all the kinds of wisdom, and as in every will, so in every word of God there is a counsel. Human understanding is wisdom, the light and law of nature, the powers and faculties of reason, and the office of conscience, Job 38. 36. By these God speaks to the children of men, and reasons with them; the voice of conscience is the voice of God, and not always a still small voice. Civil government is wisdom; it is God's ordinance, magistrates are his vicegerents; the wisdom of the nation calls to wicked people, in God's name, to repent and reform. Divine revelation is wisdom; God does,

by the written word, by the law of Moses, which sets before us the blessing and the curse, by the priest's lips which keep knowledge, by his servants the prophets, and all the ministers of his word, declare his mind to sinners, and give them warning plainly. Christ himself is wisdom, is wisdoms, for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and he is not only the essential Wisdom, but the eternal Word, by whom God speaks to us, and to whom he has committed all judgment. He it is who here both pleads with sinners, and passes sentence on them; he calls himself Wisdom, Luke 7. 35.

Three sorts of persons are here called to; 1. Simple ones that love simplicity. Sin is simplicity, and sinners are simple ones; they are fond of their simple notions of good and evil, their simple prejudices against the ways of God, sport themselves in their own deceivings, and flatter themselves in their wickedness. 2. Scorners that delight in scorning. Proud, jovial people that make a jest of every thing. But scoffers at religion are especially meant, that take pride in running down every thing that is sacred and serious. 3. Fools that hate knowledge. None but fools hate knowledge; and they are the worst of fools, that hate to be instructed, and have a rooted antipathy to serious godliness. The God of heaven desires the conversion and reformation of sinners, and not their ruin.

He invites them to repent, and become wise, ver. 23. And here the precept is plain; Turn you at my reproof. We do not make right use of reproofs, if we do not turn from evil to that which is good. The promises are very encouraging. They cannot turn by any power of their own; but God answers, Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. The gift of the Holy Spirit to be their Teacher and Sanctifier is promised to all who attend to the gracious offers.

Our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. The means of this grace is the word. It is promised, I will make known my words unto you, not only speak them to you, but make them known, give you to understand them. Special grace is necessary to sincere conversion. But that grace shall never be denied to any who seek it.

Do we feel the necessity of turning, and yet an aversion to it in our hearts? Let us plead for the abundant communi-

cations of the enlightening and renewing Spirit. If persons are made willing to submit to his influence, it is a happy preface that it will be granted, or rather, a sign that he has already begun to work, Jer. 31. 18—20.—(46.)

See what it is for which judgment will be given against impenitent sinners in the great day, and you will say they deserve it, and the Lord is righteous in it. It is rejecting Christ, and the offers of his grace, and refusing to submit to the terms of his gospel, which would have saved them both from the curse of the law of God, and from the dominion of the law of sin.

Some were careless and never heeded; others were wilful, and though they could not avoid hearing the will of Christ, they refused, ver. 24. They would not be made wise. They were obstinate to all the methods that were taken to reclaim them. God stretched out his hand in mercies bestowed upon them, and when those would not work upon them, in corrections; but they regarded the operations of his hand no more than the declarations of his mouth.

The love and condescension of Christ, and the gracious promises he mingles with his reproofs, surely should have the attention of the most careless and ungodly. It may well be inquired of them, how long they mean to proceed in such a perilous path, when the uncertainty of life and the tremendous consequences of dying without Christ are considered. But if sinners, bent upon the indulgence of their lusts, now disregard or refuse the counsels of the Son of God, they will hereafter curse their own madness and folly. Those are marked for ruin, that are deaf to reproof and good counsel.

Now sinners are in prosperity and security; they live at ease, and set sorrow at defiance. But their calamity will come, ver. 26, sickness will come, and diseases which are the arrests and harbingers of death. Distress and anguish shall come upon them, for they shall see no way to escape, ver. 27. Now God pities their folly, but he will then laugh at their calamity, ver. 26. Now God is ready to hear their prayers, and to meet them with mercy, if they would but seek to him for it; but then they shall cry in vain, ver. 28.

Prayers are of no use in the eternal world. Behold now is the accepted time, now the Lord waits to be gracious, but no place shall then be found for mercy. The punishment is indeed tremendous, but the

sin that causes it is atrocious. If a man plants and dresses a poisonous tree in his garden, it is just that he should eat of its fruit. Are we yet despisers of wisdom? Let us tremble at the threatening.—(46.)

No words can fully express the horror, distress, and anguish of the wicked when standing before the tribunal of their Judge. Now they are eager upon their own way, and fond of their own devices; but then they will have enough of them, ver. 31. Sinners are certainly miserable, if they do but eat the fruit of their own way. They that perish, must thank themselves, and can lay no blame upon any other. It is their own device. Now, they value themselves upon their worldly prosperity; they are now proud of their own security and sensuality; but the ease of the simple, so the margin reads it, shall slay them. The more secure they are, the more certain and the more dreadful will their destruction be, and the prosperity of fools shall help to destroy them, by puffing them up with pride, gluing their hearts to the world, furnishing fuel for their lusts, and hardening their hearts in evil ways.

Solomon gives assurance of safety to all that submit to the instructions of Wisdom, ver. 33. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, let us persuade sinners to repent, and let us not turn away from the Saviour to our own destruction. Surely we should not fear the cross of his people, nor envy the prosperity of fools which destroys them. Let us hearken diligently and obediently to the Lord Jesus, that we may dwell safely under his protection, and enjoy peace of conscience and confidence in God, be free from fear of evil, in life, in death, in judgment, and for ever.

There is here, not only a direct warning against robbery and murder usually so called, but also against those predatory associations and expeditions which have been common in many ages and countries, and constitute a large portion of the facts recorded in history with applause, from the false ideas of honour attached to military valour. Even in our own times privateering has been followed by many, and countenanced by authority, though directly opposed to these warnings and precepts. They apply in fact to every action which is a breach of the fifth and sixth commandments.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1—9. *Promises to those who seek wisdom.*

Solomon, having foretold the destruction of those who are obstinate in their

impiety, next applies to those who are willing to be taught. They that earnestly seek heavenly Wisdom will never complain that they have lost their labour, and the freeness of the gift does not do away the necessity of our diligence, John 6. 27. The Lord alone bestows this blessing; he has given his Son to be made wisdom unto us, and in him are laid up all treasures of wisdom and knowledge for our use. Those who are more eager to grow rich or great; more intent about their pleasures, or more eager in pursuit of science, than this Divine wisdom, as yet know nothing as they ought to know, nor will they ever, unless they seek it in another manner. But they who seek for it in the word of God, and by fervent prayer, with unwearied diligence, shall understand righteousness, judgment, and equity, yea, every good path.

Let them seek, and they shall find it, let them ask, and it shall be given them. Observe here who they are, that are thus favoured. They are the righteous, on whom the image of God is renewed, which consists in righteousness. They are his saints, devoted to his honour, and set apart for his service. Instruction is provided for them; sound wisdom is laid up for the righteous, laid up in Christ their Head, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. 2. 3, and who is made of God to us wisdom. The same that is the Spirit of revelation in the word, is a Spirit of wisdom in the souls of them that are sanctified. It is their way, the paths of judgment in which they walk, that the Lord knows, and owns, and takes care of. If we depend upon God, and seek to him for wisdom, he will uphold us in our integrity, will enable us to keep the paths of judgment, however we may be tempted to turn out of them; for he preserves the way of his saints.

Ver. 10—22. The advantages of wisdom in preserving from the snares of the wicked and directing in ways of righteousness.

The scope of these verses is to show what great advantage true wisdom will be of to us; and what good use we should make of the wisdom God gives us. If we be truly wise, it will appear by care to avoid all evil company and evil practices.

When wisdom has entire possession of thee, it will keep thee, ver. 10, 11. And when has it an entire possession of us? When it has dominion over us; when it not only fills the head with notions, but

enters into the heart, and has a commanding power and influence upon that. When we have delight in it; when knowledge becomes pleasant to the soul. Though its restraints should be in some respects unpleasant to the body, yet even those must be pleasant to the soul. A principle of grace reigning in the heart, will be a powerful preservative both against corruptions within and temptations without, Eccl. 9. 16, 18. Wisdom will preserve us from men of corrupt principles, who instil into the mind prejudices against religion, and arguments for vice. Wisdom will keep us from conversing with such men, from being ensnared by them.

The ways of sin are ways of darkness, uncomfortable and unsafe; what fools are they that leave the plain, pleasant, light-some paths of uprightness, to walk in those ways! Ps. 82. 5; 1 John 2. 11. They take pleasure in sin; both in committing it themselves, and in seeing others commit it; they rejoice in opportunities to do evil, nor is any sight more grateful to them, than to see those that are hopeful drawn into the ways of sin, and then to see them hardened and confirmed in those ways.

They are resolute in sin; they have many windings and turnings to escape their convictions, and break the force of them; they are froward in their paths, they are resolved to go on in them, whatever is said against it. Every wise man will shun the company of such as these. True wisdom will also preserve from women of corrupt practices. The former lead to spiritual wickednesses, the lusts of the unsanctified mind; these lead to fleshly lusts, which defile the body, that living temple, but withal war against the soul. She that flatters and entices to sin is to be shunned by every Israelite, as if she were a heathen, and a stranger to that sacred commonwealth; she is utterly estranged from all principles of reason, virtue, and honour.

These are evils which excite the sorrow of every serious mind, and cause every reflecting parent to look upon his children with anxiety, lest they should be entangled in such fatal snares. For however sinners may make light of these things, facts, every day, plainly show that the house of the harlot inclineth to death, and her paths to the dead.

Let the sufferings of others be our warnings. It is a sin that has a direct

tendency to the killing of the soul, the extinguishing of all good affections and dispositions in it, and the exposing of it to the wrath and curse of God, and the sword of his justice. They that live in forbidden pleasures, are dead while they live. Our Lord Jesus deters us from sinful pleasures, with the consideration of everlasting torments which follow them, where the worm dies not, nor is the fire quenched: see Matt. 5. 28, 29. It is very rare that any who are caught in this snare of the devil, recover themselves, so much is the heart hardened, and the mind blinded, by the deceitfulness of this sin.

Many interpreters think that this caution against the strange woman, beside the literal sense, is to be understood figuratively, as a caution, 1. Against idolatry. Wisdom will keep thee from all familiarity with the worshippers of images, and all inclination to join with them, which had for many ages been of such pernicious consequence to Israel, and proved so to Solomon himself. 2. Against the debauching of the intellectual powers and faculties of the soul, by the lusts and appetites of the body. Wisdom will keep thee from being captivated by the carnal mind, and from subjecting the spirit to the dominion of the flesh, which forsakes its guide, violates the covenant of our God, which inclines to death, and which, when it has undisturbed dominion, makes the case of the soul desperate. But the literal meaning is of vast importance, and the strong expressions concerning the fatal consequences of the vices here dwelt upon, have peculiar propriety.

How anxious should all be, and especially parents should be so for their children; that their minds be stored with heavenly wisdom, that they learn to relish pure pleasures, and pray for the grace of God to keep them from these dangerous snares. We must avoid the way of the evil man, and the strange woman, that we may walk in good ways; we must cease to do evil, that we may learn to do well. We must not only choose our way in general, by the good examples of the saints, but must also take directions from them in the choice of our particular paths; observe the track, and go forth by the footsteps of the flock.

Wisdom will not only keep us from the paths of the wicked, it will also lead us in the way of good men. There are two ways, in one or other of which all men

walk; the narrow way that leads unto life, and the broad way that leads unto destruction. In the narrow way few walk, but it has been trodden by all who are worthy of imitation. Those who through faith and patience inherit the promises, were close students of the word of God so far as they enjoyed its instructions; and by faith in its doctrines and promises, and a constant regard to its precepts, they obtained their good report. The righteous must leave the earth as well as the wicked, but the earth is a very different thing to them. To the wicked it is all the heaven they ever shall have, to the righteous it is the place of preparation for heaven. And is it all one to us whether we share with the wicked in the miseries of their latter end, or, with the travellers to Zion share those everlasting joys that shall crown them when they receive the end of their faith?—(46.)

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1—6. *Exhortation to obedience and faith, with a promise of Divine guidance.*

We are here taught to live a life of communion with God; this is of great consequence to us, and, as is here showed, will be of unspeakable advantage.

We are to have a continual regard to God's precepts, ver. 1, 2. We must acquaint ourselves with God's law, and his commandments; so that they may be ready to us whenever we have occasion to use them. Our wills and affections must be subject to them; not only our heads, but our hearts must keep God's commandments. In the way of believing obedience, health and outward peace may commonly be enjoyed, and if our days are not long upon earth, we shall live for ever in heaven. As grace increases, peace shall; and of the increase of Christ's government and peace, in the heart as well as in the world, there shall be no end. Great and growing peace have they that love the Divine law.

Have continual regard to God's promises, which go along with his precepts, and are to be received and retained with them, ver. 3. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; God's mercy in promising, and his truth in performing; live up to them, and preserve thine interest in them; do not forget these, but live upon them, and take the comfort of them. It is the greatest honour we are capable of in this world, to have an interest in the mercy

and truth of God. Also mercy and truth are our duty; piety and sincerity; charity toward men, fidelity toward God. Let these be fixed and commanding principles in us. A good man shall be owned as one of Wisdom's children, and shall have praise with God, as having that good understanding which is ascribed to all them that do his commandments. Thus we shall have confidence of our acceptance with God, and shall find favour with all good men, and with all others as far as it is for our profit.

We must have continual regard to God's providence, must own and depend on it in all our affairs, by faith and prayer.

1. By faith. We must repose our entire confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. We must therefore trust in the Lord with all our hearts, believing that he is able to do what he will, wise to do what is best, and good, according to his promise, to do what is best for them that love him and serve him. We must, with an entire submission and satisfaction, depend upon him to perform all things for us, and not lean to our own understanding; as if we could, by any forecast of our own, without God, bring our affairs to a good issue. Those who know themselves, find their own understandings a broken reed, which, if they lean upon, will certainly fail them. In all our conduct, we must follow providence, and not force it. We must place our whole dependence on God's mercy and grace, his teaching and assistance, his word and providence, for every thing relative to this world or the next.

2. By prayer; In all thy ways acknowledge God. Ask his leave, and do not design any thing but what is lawful. Ask his advice, and beg direction from him, not only when the case is difficult, but in every case, be it ever so plain. Ask success of him, as those who know the race is not to the swift. We must refer ourselves to him, as one from whom our judgment proceeds, and patiently wait his award. In all our ways that prove direct and pleasant, in which we gain our point to our satisfaction, we must acknowledge God with thankfulness. In all our ways that prove cross and uncomfortable, and that are hedged up with thorns, we must acknowledge God with submission. We must ever look toward God; to him, in every thing, make our requests known.

For encouragement to do this, it is

promised, He shall direct thy paths; so that thy way shall be safe and good, and the issue happy at last. Those who put themselves under Divine guidance, shall always have the benefit. God will give them that wisdom which is profitable to direct, so that they shall not turn aside into the by-paths of sin, and will wisely order the event for their good.

Ver. 7—12. *Exhortations to avoid self-dependence, to abound in works of piety, and to improve afflictions.*

We are here cautioned not to depend on our own sagacity, strength, or resolution. Not to idolize our own schemes, or judge of things by our own reason. If we prefer our own devices or grow conceited of our own wisdom, we shall soon be left to prove our own folly. There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, than conceitedness of our own wisdom. In the fear of the Lord and departing from evil, health and prosperity will be blessings, and if we fail of them we shall find inward support and consolation. The prudence, temperance, and sobriety, the calmness and composure of mind, and the government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tend not only to the health of the soul, but to the health of the body.

If the Lord confer on us worldly wealth we must honour him in the use of it. Worldly wealth is but poor substance, yet, such as it is, we must honour God with it, and then, if ever, it becomes substantial. And he is not honoured with our substance if it be extravagantly spent upon ourselves, in vanity or luxury, or hoarded up. The more liberally we communicate in works of piety and charity, in proportion to our ability, the more plentifully we shall reap. This by no means tends to poverty, but to bring a blessing on a man's estate, ver. 10. God shall bless thee with an increase of that which is for use, not for show or ornament. They that do good with what they have, shall have more to do more good with.

And should the Lord see good to visit us with adversity and sickness, let us not forget that the exhortation speaketh to us as to children; trials are pledges of his love, and the appointments of his wisdom for our good. We must not despise affliction, be it ever so light and short, as if it were not worth taking notice of. We must not be insensible under our afflictions; har-

denying ourselves under them, and concluding we can get through them without God. We must not be weary of an affliction, be it ever so heavy and long, not faint under it, so the apostle renders it; not be dispirited, or driven to despair, or use any indirect means for our relief. We must not think that the affliction either presses harder, or continues longer, than is meet; nor conclude that deliverance will never come, because it does not come so soon as we expect it.

When we are in affliction it will be our comfort that it is the chastening of the Lord; which is a reason we should submit, and be satisfied in it. It comes from his wise affection as a Father. The father corrects the son whom he loves, nay, and *because* he loves him, and desires he may be wise and good. Thus God hath said, As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, Rev. 3. 19. It is a great comfort to God's children under their afflictions, that they flow from covenant love. That they are so far from doing them any real hurt, that, by the grace of God working with them, they are means of their sanctification.

12. "And chasteneth the son in whom he delighteth." *Holden* shows that the original will bear this translation, which agrees with the quotation of St. Paul, Heb. 12. 6. He well observes that he cannot believe the Holy Spirit by whom the apostles were inspired would suffer them to misinterpret the words of inspiration.

Ver. 13—20. *Exhortation to gain wisdom.*

If we become acquainted with Wisdom we shall have great cause for gratitude; for happy is he, who by any means, or at any price, obtains that inestimable benefit. The merchandise of it is far more lucrative to ourselves, and capable of greater improvement for the good of others, than that which is carried on for the gain of silver and gold. No precious jewels, or earthly treasures are worthy to be compared therewith, whether the concerns of time or eternity be considered. Prospect of advantage is the spring and spur of industry; Solomon therefore shows us how much it will be to our profit. That is well got, and to good purpose, which is thus used to good purpose.

We must trade for it. The merchant-like of wisdom, intimates that we must make it our business, as the merchant bestows his main thoughts and time upon his merchandise. That we must venture all in it, and be willing to part with all for it.

This wisdom is the Lord Jesus Christ

and his salvation, sought and obtained by faith and prayer. By his unsearchable riches the believer's ransom is paid, his wants supplied, his soul enriched with knowledge and holiness; in him, he hath wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Everlasting life is in his right hand, and his left hand, as it were, confers temporal riches and honour, if for our good, for they are absolutely at his disposal. Were it not for our unbelief, remaining sinfulness, and inattention, we should find all *our* ways pleasantness, and our paths peace, for *his* are so; but we too often step aside from them to our own injury and grief.

The Lord Jesus is indeed the tree of life, of which the believer lays hold, and keeps hold by faith and love. He is happy in his portion and his choice, for he by whom the Father made the world, who by himself cleansed our sins, cannot want power, knowledge, or love, to guide us in life, receive our souls at death, or raise our bodies from the grave; and all this he is pledged to do for his people.

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, so that it cannot be removed, nor can ever fail of answering all the ends of its creation. Christ is that wisdom, by whom the worlds were made, and still consist; happy therefore are they to whom he is made of God wisdom. He has wherewithal to make good all promises of long life, riches, and honour; for all the wealth of heaven, earth, and seas is his.

Ver. 21—26. *The benefits of the guidance of Wisdom.*

Let us not suffer Christ's words to depart from before our eyes, that we may keep sound wisdom and discretion; such as will be life to our souls, our durable honour and ornament. Then shall we walk safely in his ways, we shall be composed in times of consternation, when sudden fear and destruction overtake the wicked. When laid in the silent grave we shall sweetly sleep in Jesus until the resurrection, when we shall awake to judgment, and even then be free from fear.

The natural life, and all that belongs to it, shall be under the protection of God's providence; the spiritual life, and all its interests, under the protection of his grace, so that thou shalt be kept from falling into sin or trouble. He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; and to him thou hast committed thyself, and taken shelter under the shadow of his

wings. Let not the wise and good man forget himself, and then he will not give way to any fear that has torment, be the alarm ever so sudden. Let him not fear the desolation of the wicked, when it comes. Be not afraid of that which appears most formidable, for the Lord shall be not only thy protector to keep thee safe, but thy confidence to keep thee secure, so that thy foot shall not be taken by thine enemies, nor insnares by thine own fears.

Ver. 27—35. *A contrast between the state of the wicked and the upright.*

We are here cautioned against the backwardness some show to pay just demands upon them when they are able, and their reluctance to part with their money in acts of piety and charity. We should not only be ready to pay every debt upon the first demand, but be glad to distribute and willing to communicate. Our business is to observe the precepts of Christ, and to copy his example, to do justice, to love mercy, and to beware of covetousness, and to be ready for every good work, avoiding needless contention, and bearing even injuries, if possible, rather than seeking legal redress. Contend not for that which thou hast no title to; resent not that as a provocation, which peradventure was but an oversight. Never trouble thy neighbour with frivolous complaints and accusations, or vexatious lawsuits, when there is no harm done thee, or none worth speaking of, or thou mightest right thyself in a friendly way; law must be the last refuge. It will be found there is little got by striving.

Let us be careful not to envy prosperous oppressors—far be it from the disciples of Christ to choose any of their ways. Never think of doing as he does, even if thou wert sure to get by it all that he has, for it would be dearly bought. They are an abomination to the Lord, but his consolations are found even in the lowly cottages of the righteous. These truths may be despised by the covetous and luxurious, and the infidel will ridicule them; but everlasting contempt will be the portion of such scorers, while Divine favour is shown, and grace communicated to the humble believer, who alone is truly wise, and who shall inherit everlasting glory.

God bestows grace on men that he may be glorified, and those who are made sensible of their emptiness and guilt will ascribe praise to him for the least of his

favours. In them he will display the excellency of his love, and enrich them with his blessings in this and in the everlasting world, while fools shall be covered with everlasting disgrace.—(46.)

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1—13. *An earnest exhortation to the study of wisdom, taken from the instructions Solomon had received of his parents.*

Here we have the invitation which Solomon gives to children to come, and receive instruction from him. Let all young people, in the days of their childhood and youth, take pains to get knowledge and grace, for that is the learning age. Let all that would receive instruction, come with the disposition of children, though they be grown persons; let all prejudices be laid aside, let them take the word as the word of a father, which comes both with authority and with affection. We must see it coming from God as our Father in heaven, to whom we pray, from whom we expect blessings. We must look upon our teachers as our fathers, who love us, and seek our welfare; and therefore, though instruction carry in it reproof and correction, for so the word signifies, bid it welcome.

He had these instructions from his parents, and teaches his children the same they taught him. His parents loved him, and therefore taught him. Observe, when Solomon was grown up, he not only remembered, but took pleasure in repeating the good lessons his parents taught him when he was a child. He did not forget them, so deep were the impressions they made upon him. Those that have a good education, though they strive to shake it off, will find it hang about them a great while, and if it do not their case is very sad. He was not ashamed of them, such a high value had he for them. Though Solomon was a wise man, and divinely inspired, yet, when he was to teach wisdom, he made use of his father's words.

Wise and godly men, in every age of the world and rank in society, agree that true wisdom consists in obedience, and is inseparably connected with happiness; and the well-beloved Son of the Father says to us, Let thy heart retain my words, keep my commandments and live, Matt. 7. 24—27; John 14. 21—26. He is that Wisdom which we are exhorted to seek above all things. Get this wisdom, get this understanding. And again, Get wis-

dom, and with all thy getting, get understanding. Pray for it, take pains for it, give diligence in the use of all appointed means to attain it. Get dominion over thy corruptions, which are thy follies; get possession of wise principles, and the habits of wisdom: be more in care, and take more pains to get this, than to get the wealth of this world. An interest in his salvation is necessary, whatever we go without or lose for the sake of it. His words we should remember, and not decline from them, whatever we forget or omit. This wisdom is "the principal thing," the pearl of great price, the sinner's one thing needful. If we sell all to purchase it, forsake all to secure it, count all but loss for the excellency of it, and lay down our lives in adhering to it, our gain will be sure and infinite. Keep Wisdom therefore, whatever it cost thee, for she is thy life. All thy satisfaction will be found in this; and a soul without true wisdom and grace is really a dead soul. If we love and serve the Redeemer he will keep our souls unto eternal life, give us the honour that cometh from God, adorn us with the beauties of holiness, and give to us a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

How poor, contemptible, and wretched are those, who, with all their getting of wealth, learning, fame, preferment, or power, die without getting understanding, without Christ, without hope, and without God! Let us receive the sayings of Him that hath the words of eternal life, and we shall daily perceive and experience, that He teaches the ways of wisdom, and leads in the right paths. Thus our path will be plain before us; we shall avoid being straitened or stumbling, by taking fast hold of instruction, resolved not to let her go, but to keep her as our life.

3. "For I was a son very dear to my father, and well beloved in the sight of my mother."
—*Holden.*

Ver. 14—19. *A caution against bad company, and all fellowship with the works of darkness.*

For fear of falling into wicked courses, we must shun wicked company. We must take heed of falling in with sin and sinners. Those who have been trained up in the way they should go, let them never turn aside into the way they should not go; let them not so much as enter into it, it will prove difficult to retreat with safety. As soon as thou art sensible of thy mistake, retire immediately, take not

a step more, stay not a minute longer, in the way that leads to destruction.

We must dread and detest the ways of sin and sinners, and decline them with the utmost care imaginable. The way of evil men may seem pleasant and sociable, and the nearest way to compass some secular end we may have in view; but it is an evil way, and will end ill, and therefore, if thou love thy God and thy soul, avoid it, pass not by it, that thou mayest not be tempted to enter into it; and if thou find thyself near it, turn from it, and pass away, and get as far off as thou canst. The manner of expression intimates the imminent danger we are in, the need we have of this caution, and the great importance of it. It intimates likewise, at what a distance we should keep from sin and sinners. He does not say, Keep at a *due* distance, but at a *great* distance, the further the better; never think you can get far enough from it.

The reasons to enforce this caution, are the character of the men whose way thou art warned to shun. Whatever friendship they may pretend, one time or other they will do thee mischief. Consider the character of the way itself which thou art warned to shun, compare it with the right way which thou art invited to walk in.

The way of the righteous is light, ver. 18. Christ is their way, and he is the light. They are guided by the word of God, and that is a light to their feet. It is a shining light. Their way shines to themselves, in the joy and comfort of it; it shines before others, in the lustre and honour of it; it shines before men, who see their good works, Matt. 5. 16. They go on in their way with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that walk in the light. It is as the morning-light, which shines out of obscurity, Isa. 58. 8, 10, and puts an end to the works of darkness. It is a growing light; it shines more and more; like that of the rising sun, which goes forward. Grace, the guide of this way, is growing; the joy which is the pleasure of this way, that honour which is the brightness of it, and all that happiness which is indeed its light, shall be still increasing. The light of the day-spring will at length be perfect day, noon-day light, and to that is the enlightened soul pressing forward. The saints will not be perfect till they come to heaven, but there they shall themselves shine as the sun when he goes forth in

his strength, Matt. 13. 43. The hour of death will only occasion a short interruption of the increasing light which will issue in perfect and eternal day.

The way of sin is as darkness. The works we are cautioned not to have fellowship with, are, works of darkness. What true pleasure and satisfaction can they have, who know no pleasure and satisfaction but in evil? What sure guide have they that cast God's word behind them? The way of the wicked is dark, and therefore dangerous; for they stumble, and yet know not at what they stumble; they fall into sin, but are not aware which way the temptation came, and therefore know not how to avoid it the next time. They fall into trouble, but never inquire wherefore God contends with them; nor what will be in the end of it, Ps. 82. 5; Job 18. 5, 6. This is the way we are hid to shun.

Ver. 20—27. *Exhortation to faith and holiness.*

It is not enough for us to shun the occasions of sin, we must also study the methods of duty. The sayings of heavenly wisdom must be the principles by which we govern ourselves. We must receive them readily. The attentive hearing of the word of God, is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart, and a good means of carrying it on. We must retain them carefully; view them, review them, and in every thing aim to conform to them, as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man. Let the word of God be written in the heart, and that which is written there, will remain.

They that seek, find, and keep them, shall find food in them. As the spiritual life was begun by the word as the instrument, so by the same word it is still nourished and maintained. We could not live without it, we may by faith live upon it. They are health to the whole man, both body and soul. They are health to all flesh, so the Greek. There is enough to cure all the diseases of this distempered world. They are a medicine to all their flesh, so the word is; to all their corruptions; to all their grievances, which are as thorns in the flesh. There is in the word of God a proper remedy for all our spiritual maladies.

Keep thy heart with all diligence. God, who gave us souls, gave us a strict charge with them; Keep thy heart; take heed to thy spirit, Deut. 4. 9. We must main-

tain a holy jealousy of ourselves, and set a strict guard, accordingly, upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt, and getting hurt; from being defiled by sin, and disturbed by trouble; keep a conscience void of offence; keep the affections upon right objects, and in due bounds. Keep them with all keepings; so the word is; there are many ways of keeping things—by care, by strength, by calling in help, and we must use them all in keeping our hearts; and all little enough, so deceitful are they, Jer. 17. 9. Or, above all keepings; we must keep our hearts with more care and diligence than we keep any thing else. A good reason is given for this care; because out of it are the issues of life. Above all we should seek from the Lord Jesus, that living water, that sanctifying Spirit which is in the hearts of believers a well of water springing up and issuing forth unto everlasting life. Thus we shall be enabled to put away a froward mouth and perverse lips; our eyes will be turned from beholding vanity, looking straight forward.

We must keep our eye upon our Master, and be careful to approve ourselves to him; keep our eye upon our rule, and conform to that; keep our eye upon our mark, the prize of the high-calling, and direct all toward that. We must ponder the path of our feet, walking by the rule of God's word, observing the cautions, and treading in the steps of our Lord and Master. When viewed thus, how beautiful, excellent, and happy is true christianity. Alas! how far short do we come in every particular. Lord, forgive the past, and enable us to follow thee more closely for the time to come.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1—14. *Exhortations to wisdom—The evils of licentiousness.*

Solomon here addresses himself to all young men, as unto his children. In God's name, he demands attention; for he writes by Divine inspiration, not only hear what is said, and read what is written, but apply thy mind to it, and consider it diligently, ver. 1, 2.

The caution is, to abstain from fleshly lusts, from adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness. Some apply this figuratively, and by the adulterous woman here understand idolatry, false doctrine, which

tends to debauch men's minds and manners; but the primary scope of it is plainly to warn us against seventh-commandment sins, which youth is so prone to, the temptations to which are so violent, the examples of which are so many, and which, where admitted, are so destructive to all virtue in the soul, that it is not strange that Solomon's cautions against it are so very pressing, and so often repeated. And this hath frequently been Satan's method of drawing men from the worship of God into idolatry or false religion, 1 Kings 11. 1-8.

We are here warned of two things, 1. That we do not listen to the charms of this sin, ver. 3. Consider how fatal the consequences; how bitter the fruit, when the end will be terrors of conscience, ver. 4. And take it any way it wounds. Solomon could speak by experience, Eccl. 7. 26. It leads to the torments of hell. If some have repented and been saved, yet the direct tendency of this sin is to the destruction of body and soul, ver. 5. Those that are entangled in this sin, should be reminded that there is but a step between them and hell.

Consider how false the charms are, ver. 6. Artful deceivers can employ a thousand wiles to withdraw the soul from returning to the path of life. They can change their language and conduct, they can assume every form, work upon every weakness and passion, to maintain or resume their influence.

Those are ignorant of Satan's devices, who do not understand that his great object, in all his temptations, is to keep them from choosing the path of life, to prevent them from going to heaven, that, being himself shut out from happiness, he may keep them out from it. And in order hereunto, he seeks to keep them from pondering the path of life, from considering how much it is for their advantage that they should walk in that path. And these are sins that do, as much as any thing, blind the understanding, sear the conscience, and keep people from pondering the path of life, Hos. 4. 11.

2. That we do not approach even the borders of this sin, ver. 7, 8. This caution is introduced with a solemn preface. The caution itself is very pressing; to shun the streets and passages where such tempters lie in wait. This intimates that we ought to have a very great dread and detestation of the sin. That we ought in-

dustriously to avoid every thing which may be an occasion of this sin, or a step towards it. Those who would be kept from harm, must keep out of harm's way. If we thrust ourselves into temptation, we mock God when we pray, Lead us not into temptation. We ought not to be confident of the strength of our own resolutions, so as to venture upon the brink of sin, with a promise to ourselves, that hitherto we will come, and no further. Whatever is become a snare and an occasion of sin, we must part with that, though it is dearest to us, rather than hazard our own souls, Matt. 5. 29, 30.

The arguments Solomon here uses to enforce this caution, are taken from the many mischiefs which attend this sin. 1. It blasts the reputation, ver. 9. It makes men contemptible and base. 2. It wastes the flower of men's time, to indulge that base, sinful lust, which with the utmost cruelty wars against the soul. Those years that should be given to the honour of a gracious God, are spent in the service of a cruel sin. 3. It ruins the estate, ver. 10. 4. It is destructive to the health, and shortens men's days, ver. 11. These lusts not only war against the soul, which the sinner neglects, and is in no care about, but they war against the body which he is so indulgent of, and is in such care for. 5. It will fill the mind with horror, if ever conscience be awakened. Though thou art merry now, yet thou wilt certainly mourn at the last, ver. 11. Thou art making work for repentance, and laying up matter for vexation and torment in the reflection. Sooner or later it will bring sorrow.

The convicted sinner reproaches himself, and aggravates his own folly. He will most bitterly lament, that he could not endure either to be taught his duty, or to be told of his faults, ver. 12. Those who have had a good education, and do not live accordingly, will have a great deal to answer for another day, ver. 13, and will be made to remember it as an aggravation of their sin, and consequently, of their ruin. By the frequent acts of sin, the habits of it become rooted and confirmed, ver. 14.

He confesses, I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation; reverence of the place and company could not restrain him, but he was wicked and vile there.

Or, I was almost in all evil, in the

midst of every congregation of evil doers. By the miracle of mercy true repentance may prevent the tremendous consequences of such sins; but this is seldom the case; far more die as they have lived. And what language can express the case of the self-ruined sinner in the eternal world, enduring the remorse of his own conscience, the worm that never dieth!

Ver. 15—23. Remedies against licentiousness—*The miserable end of the wicked.*

The encouragement of lawful marriage is a means which God hath appointed to keep from these destructive vices. The comforts of the married state, when entered into in a prudent and pious manner, and when the duties of it are faithfully and affectionately performed, are so infinitely superior to all unlawful connexions, that if not devoid of sense and reason, they must be preferred, as clear or running waters are preferable to a stagnant pond.

The comforts of domestic life, and the satisfaction of a hopeful family growing up to be useful members of society, are among the choicest blessings of this life. But we have no assurance of being properly united, except as God is acknowledged in this important step, and we attend to the rules of his word, seeking his direction and blessing, and acting with tenderness and affection.

And ever remember, that though secret deviations from duty may escape the eye of our fellow-creatures, yet a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord. And if nothing else apprehend or testify against him, his own iniquities will entangle him as in a net, and his sins bind him as cords. For when any have plunged themselves into this sin, they very hardly and very rarely recover themselves.

It is a sin which, if it be not forsaken, will unavoidably be their ruin. The sinner, who, having been often reprov'd, hardens his neck, shall die at length without instruction; having had sufficient general warning given him already, he shall have no particular warnings, but he shall die without seeing his danger beforehand, shall die because he would not receive instruction, but in the greatness of his folly would go astray. Those who are so foolish as to choose the way of sin, are justly left of God to themselves, to go on till they come to the destruction it leads to.

But who takes more effectual methods to be faithful in all the branches of moral life, than the soul that is faithful to the

Saviour? Be thou to us, O Lord, all we need, and by thy Spirit, and the preventing and restraining influences of thy grace, we shall be following the apostle's maxim, both in thinking and in doing whatsoever things are true, honest, just, lovely, or of good report, Phil. 4. 8.—(37.)

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1—5. *Cautions against rash suretyship.*

The scriptures teach us discretion even as to our temporal concerns; a life regulated according to the word of God conduces to our true interest even in this present world. We are stewards of our worldly substance, and have to answer to the Lord for our disposal of it; to waste it, therefore, in rash schemes or such engagements as may entangle us in difficulties and temptations is wrong. If any have been led into such engagements, it behoves them to lose no time, and to shrink from no difficulties, by which the ruinous effects may be hindered or mitigated. But how base are they who take advantage of a man to draw him into ruin. In these matters our supposed friends often prove strangers, and painfully teach us to put no confidence in man.

But how are we to understand this? We are not to think it is unlawful in every case to become surety for another; it may be an act of justice or charity; he that has friends, may see cause in this instance to show himself friendly, and it may be no act of imprudence. We may help one that we know to be honest and diligent, and so do him a great kindness. But it is every man's wisdom to keep out of debt, for it is an encumbrance upon him, entangles him in the world, puts him in danger of doing wrong, or suffering wrong, and makes him very much a slave to the world. Christians therefore, who are bought with a price, should not thus, without need, make themselves the servants of men, 1 Cor. 7. 23. It is great folly to entangle ourselves with necessitous and imprudent persons, perhaps unduly discontented with their situations, and in haste to be rich. A man ought never to be bound as surety for more than he is both able and willing to pay, and can afford to pay without wronging his family, in case the principal fail, for he ought to look upon every engagement as his own debt.

Let us hence be reminded that every rash and wicked word will be remembered

at the day of judgment. And if we ought in prudence to use every means to escape from earthly calamities which threaten, how earnest should we be to flee from the wrath to come, and to escape from the snares of Satan! We are not yet so entangled but that we may seek God as our Friend, yet no time must be lost, lest the day of mercy expire.

But let us take heed lest we any way make ourselves guilty of other men's sins against God, 1 Tim. 5. 22, for that is worse, and much more dangerous, than being bound for other men's debts. And if we must be in all this care to get our debts to men forgiven, much more to get our peace made with God. Humble thyself to him, make sure of Christ as thy Friend, to intercede for thee; pray earnestly that thy sins may be pardoned, and that thou mayest be delivered from going down to the pit, and it shall not be in vain. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids, till this is done.

1. See note, 17. 18.

Ver. 6—11. *A rebuke to slothfulness.*

Diligence in business is every man's wisdom and duty; not so much that he may attain worldly prosperity, as that he may not be a burden to society, or a scandal to the church; that he may be out of the way of temptation, and be able to relieve the distressed. The sluggard is therefore sent to school to the insignificant but provident ants, who take more proper care for the future than slothful men, though endowed with reasoning powers.

Man is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, and yet is so degenerated, that he may learn wisdom from the meanest insects, and be shamed by them. When we observe the wonderful sagacity of the inferior creatures, we must not only give glory to the God of nature, who has made them thus, but receive instruction to ourselves; by spiritualizing common things, we may make the things of God familiar to us, and converse with them daily.

Habits of indolence and indulgence grow upon people; they cannot resolve to leave their beds, or to encounter difficulties. Thus life runs to waste; and poverty, though at first at a distance, gradually draws near, like a traveller; and when it arrives, is like an armed man, too strong to be resisted. Slothfulness is often the effect of being brought up with large

expectations; while habits of industry are more generally acquired by those who have not such expectations, thus some grow rich and others poor, one generation changing after another. All this may be applied to the concerns of our souls. Awake, thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light, Eph. 5. 14. Alas! how many love their sleep of sin, and their dreams of worldly happiness, and beg to be excused a little longer from repentance, prayer, self-denial, and diligence. Shall we not seek to awaken such, that they may see their danger while yet there is a way of escaping from it? Shall we not give diligence to secure our own salvation, and to seize every opportunity of glorifying God, and doing good to others?

6. The Greek version adds an exhortation to go to the bee, and learn from her labours. There are in the Greek many such additional proverbs. This seems interpolated by some transcriber. There are also many proverbs in the Hebrew which are not in the Greek.—*Wall.*

8. Modern naturalists question the ants providing for the winter; but here, as elsewhere, the sacred writers refer to the popular ideas of the times, without entering into questions of natural philosophy. The habits of many animals differ in cold and hot climates.

Ver. 12—19. *Seven things especially hateful to God.*

If the slothful are to be condemned, that do nothing, much more those that contrive how to do all the ill they can. It is a naughty person that is here spoken of; called in Hebrew, a man of Belial, a term often used in scripture, and this is the explication of it. Observe how a man of Belial is here described. He says and does every thing very artfully, and with design. He is continually devising one mischief or other, resembling Satan not only in subtlety, but in malice. Observe what his doom is, ver. 15. His ruin shall come without warning, and without relief.

Here is a list of those things which are in a special manner odious to God, all which are generally to be found in the men of Belial. It is an evidence of the good-will God bears to mankind, that those sins are in a special manner provoking to him, which are prejudicial to the comfort of human life and society. These things which God hates, we must hate in ourselves; it is nothing to hate them in others.

1. Haughtiness, all conceit of ourselves, and all contempt of others. There are seven things that God hates, and pride.

is the first, because it is at the root of much sin, and gives rise to it. 2. Falsehood, and fraud, and dissimulation. God and all good men hate and abhor lying. 3. Cruelty and blood-thirstiness. The devil was, from the beginning, a liar and a murderer, John 8. 44. 4. Subtlety in the contrivance of sin, wisdom to do evil, a heart that designs, and a head that devises, wicked imaginations. The more there is of craft and management in sin, the more it is an abomination to God. 5. Vigour and diligence in the prosecution of sin. The policy and vigilance, the eagerness and industry of sinners, in their sinful pursuits, may shame us, that we go about that which is good so awkwardly and so coldly. 6. False-witness bearing, which is one of the greatest mischiefs that the wicked imagination can devise, and against which there is least fence. 7. Making mischief between relations and neighbours, and using means, not only to alienate them one from another, but to irritate them one against another. Those who, by tale-bearing and slandering, by carrying ill-natured stories, aggravating every thing that is said and done, and by suggesting jealousies and evil surmises, blow the coals of contention, are but preparing for themselves a fire of the same nature.

Let us then shun all such practices, and watch and pray against every propensity to them, and avoid, with marked disapproval, all who are guilty of them, whatever may be their rank in society.

Ver. 20—35. *Repeated exhortations to walk according to God's commandments, and to abstain from adultery.*

Here is a general exhortation faithfully to adhere to the word of God, and to take it for our guide in all our actions.

We must look upon the word of God both as a light and as a law, ver. 20, 23. Scripture light is the sure light. It is a law which our wills must submit to. We must retain the word of God, and the good instructions which our parents gave us out of it. It will be our guide, our companion, and we must converse with it. The word of God has something to say to us upon all occasions, if we would but inquire what it has to say, and give it our attention. Let not faithful reproofs, which have a direct tendency to make us happy, ever make us uneasy.

Solomon had before spoken of the women who had forsaken the guides of their

youth; he here particularly refers to one who yet lived with her husband. It would be as vain to expect to commit this crime without punishment, as to take fire into the bosom and not burn the raiment, or to walk on hot coals and not be burned.

When we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the seeds of the spiritual life in the soul, we shall not wonder that the cautions against it are so often repeated, and so largely inculcated. Christians should most carefully avoid all approach to this crime. Every suspicious familiarity will prove a wound and a reproach to a man's character, which will not easily be wiped away. Stand in awe therefore, and sin not; expose not thyself to misery for a moment's sordid pleasure, which will be bitterness in the end.

Let us notice the subjects of this chapter in one view. Let us remember Him who willingly became our Surety when we were strangers and enemies, though he well knew how dear it would cost him to pay our debt, and ransom our souls, and how ungrateful we should often prove.

Shall Christians, who have such prospects, motives, and examples, be slothful, inactive, and inconstant? Shall we neglect what is pleasing to God, what honours him, and what he will graciously reward? Let all keep at a distance from temptation, as well as pray not to be led into it. May we close every sense by which such insinuating poison can enter our imaginations or affections.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1—5. *Repeated invitations to learn wisdom.*

The word of God is to be to us that which we are most careful of. We must lay up God's commandments safely, that we may not be robbed of them by the wicked one. Not only, keep them, and you shall live; but, keep them as you would your life, as those that cannot live without them. Those who reproach strict and circumspect walking, as needless preciseness, consider not that the law is to be kept as the apple of the eye, for indeed it is the apple of our eye; the law is light; the law in the heart is the eye of the soul. Let it be precious to thee, look upon it as an ornament. Bind them on thy fingers, that they may be constant memorandums

to thee of thy duty, that thou mayest have them always in view. Let the word of God dwell richly in us, and be written where it will be always at hand to be read. Where sin was written, Jer. 17. 1, let the word of God be written. It is the matter of a promise, Heb. 8. 10, I will write my law in their hearts.

Let us seek the benefits and honour of relationship to Christ by obedient attention to his word; then we may indeed say to wisdom, Thou art my sister, and call understanding our relative. In this way we shall be preserved from the fatal effects of our own passions, the snares of Satan and his emissaries. Let the word of God confirm our dread of sin, and our resolutions against it; let it discover to us its fallacies, and suggest to us answers to all its flatteries.

Ver. 6—27. *A narrative illustrating the characters and arts of seducers, with an earnest warning against such wickedness.*

We have here an affecting illustration of the danger of youthful lusts. The mode of instruction is the narration of a history, or a parable, it matters not which, of the most instructive kind. Will any one dare to venture on temptations that lead to impurity, after Solomon has set before his eyes in so lively and plain a manner the danger of even going near the harlot's house? Then is he as inexcusable as the man who would dance on the edge of a precipice, when he has just seen another fall headlong from the same place, the victim of his rashness and folly. Self-ruined sinners must acknowledge that their misery began in disregard to God's blessed book.—(46.)

When women forget the use of raiment, and deck themselves out to attract notice, they are far from being innocent; they give encouragement to the licentious; and when modesty is once lost, they often become most shameless. When we have nothing to do, the devil will quickly find us something to do. We must take heed, not only of idle days, but of idle evenings, lest they prove inlets into temptation. Virtue is penance to those to whom home is a prison. Sometimes even religious ordinances have been perverted to become a cloak for crimes; and sacred seasons are made occasions for carnal feasts, attended with every vice. The outward performances of religion, if they do not harden against sin, harden in it, and embolden carnal hearts to venture on it.

Let us therefore look very carefully what effect our peace has on our hearts and lives. Are we the more humble or the more proud for our comfort? Do we walk more closely or loosely with God for this peace? Can we show that grace and peace grow in us alike? Or, does the one appear less since we pretend more to the other. By this we may know whether our peace comes from the Peacemaker, or the peace-marrer; from the God of truth, or the father of lies.—(28.)

We ought daily to pray that we may be preserved from running into temptation, else we invite the enemies of our souls to spread snares for us. Ever avoid the purlieus of vice. Beware of those sins which are represented as pleasant sins. They are more dangerous than others, because they most easily gain the heart, and most powerfully guard it against repentance. Our first parents found that the pleasure of forbidden fruit was only an introduction to horror and remorse. And our hearts must be guarded against the admission of sin by stronger motives than the fear of detection and disgrace. Joseph's motive was irresistible! How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? Gen. 39. 9. Do nothing till thou hast well considered the end of it. Were a man to live as long as Methuselah, and to spend all his days in the highest delights of sin, one hour of the anguish and tribulation that *must* follow would far outweigh them. Remember, then, indulgence given to any impure imagination is the indication of a sensual heart, and an introduction to a licentious behaviour, which will in all probability lead to a miserable end. He that has entered on a course of it, is on a staircase that leads down to death and hell; and the descent makes the brain so giddy, that there seldom is power to make a timely retreat. Those are gross self-flatterers who imagine they may go on for a time in sensuality, and stop short and repent when they please. None but God can say to the waves of sin, Hitherto shall ye come and no further, and here shall your proud swellings be stayed.—(46.)

6. Or, lattice.

14. The greatest part of the flesh of the peace-offerings was by the law returned back to the offerers, to feast upon with their friends; which, if they were peace-offerings of thanksgiving, was to be all eaten the same day, and none of it left until the morning, Lev. 7. 15.—*Henry.* It indicated that she had plentiful and excellent provisions at her house for his entertainment. The

peace offerings were to be of the best, Lev. 22. 21.—*Pooler*. See Deut. 12. 6, 7.

22, 23. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter; or, as a hart boundeth into the toils, till a dart strike through his liver. As a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.—*Hunt*.

24. Solomon had, by his conduct, given a bad example to his subjects, and excited or encouraged proceedings still worse than his own. His repeated and earnest exhortations upon this painful subject show what his own experience was, and are strong proofs of deep humiliation and repentance for his transgressions.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1—11. *Christ, as Wisdom, calls to the sons of men, to hear his instructions.*

The will of God revealed to us for our salvation is here represented to us as easy to be known and understood, that none may have an excuse for their ignorance or error; and worthy to be embraced, that none may have an excuse for their carelessness and unbelief. It is published and proclaimed in some measure by the works of the creation, more fully by the consciences of men, and the eternal reasons and rules of good and evil, but more clearly by Moses and the prophets.

When we observe the ways of men, we might suppose that the instructions of wisdom were withheld from them. But the chief difficulty is to get them to attend to instruction. God's ministers are appointed to testify to people, both publicly and from house to house. Their own consciences follow them with admonitions wherever they go, which they cannot avoid hearing, while they carry their heads and hearts with them, which are a law unto them. And an obedient attention to the words of Christ will guide the most ignorant into saving knowledge of the truth. But alas, men are far more desirous of diversion than of instruction. Places where folly is heard, and demands a high price for admission, are thronged; while the gospel of Christ, freely and faithfully preached, is often thinly attended. Yet the condescension of the Saviour in addressing his words to the fallen sons of men demands our strictest regard; he points out the only way of life and salvation.

The things revealed are worthy to be known, well worthy of all acceptance. Every word Christ utters is right and excellent. His lips abominate all guile and wickedness; they give no needless pain, they impose no useless restraints, and demand no unreasonable services. If not plained to any, it is because they do not fear the

Lord; they are not willing to be disciples of Christ, or to do the will of God; they do not properly value the knowledge of the truth, or bestow due pains to acquire it. Where there is an understanding heart, and a disposition to receive the truth in love, the instructions of wisdom are valued above silver and gold; all things are counted but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

Whatever we can wish for of the wealth of this world, if we had it, it were not worthy to be compared with the advantages that attend serious godliness.

The royal sage began with considering wisdom in the abstract, which he presents to the admiration of mankind. As he advances, his mind is elevated by contemplating God, the fountain of all wisdom; and he proceeds to pour forth the suggestions of sacred inspiration in terms of such splendour and majesty, as can be attributed to no other than the eternal Son of God.—(36.)

Ver. 12—21. *The nature, the power, and the riches of Wisdom.*

Wisdom here is Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; it is Christ in the word, and Christ in the heart; not only Christ revealed to us, but Christ revealed in us. All prudence and ingenuity are from the Lord.

This wisdom lies in proposing the best end, and choosing the most suitable measures and time. As God is the Author, so he is the End of all things to himself. And as the just display of his own glory is the means to his end, his doing that is most conspicuous in such things as the creation of the world, his providential government of his creatures, and in the mighty work of redemption, wherein he hath abounded in all wisdom and prudence, and in the conducting his redeemed through all the difficulties of time to their eternal state.—(40.)

But God's wisdom is most to be admired in his saving sinners, consistently with the honour of the Divine law and justice. Through the redemption of Christ's precious blood, the riches of his grace have abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. 1. 8. We had found out many inventions for our ruin; he found one for our recovery. Counsel and sound wisdom are with him and from him. It is pride and arrogance, evil ways and froward conversation, which he hates; these render men unwilling to hear his humbling, awakening, and holy instructions.

Christ, as God, has strength and wisdom; wisdom and might are his; as Redeemer, he is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. To all that are his, he is made of God both Strength and Wisdom; in him they are laid up for us, that we may both know and do our duty. He is the wonderful Counsellor, and gives that grace which alone is sound wisdom. He is Understanding itself, and has strength for all those that strengthen themselves in him. True religion gives men the best counsel in all difficult cases, and helps to make their way plain; wherever it is, it is understanding, it has strength; it will be all that to us which we need, both for services and sufferings. Where the word of God dwells richly, it makes a man perfect, and furnishes him thoroughly for every good word and work.

He is the Fountain of authority. As by him kings reign, it behoves them not only to decree justice, and exercise authority according to his precepts, but to come and trust in him for the salvation of their souls. Magistracy is his appointment, the benefits of it are good to fallen men.

His wisdom will make all those happy, truly happy, that receive and embrace it. They shall be happy in the love of Christ. He says, I love them that love me, ver. 17. Those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, shall be loved of him with a peculiar distinguishing love; he will love them, and manifest himself to them. They shall be happy in the success of their inquiries after him. Seek him early, seek him earnestly, seek him first before any thing else. They that begin betimes in the days of their youth to seek him, shall find what they seek. Christ shall be theirs, and they shall be his; he never said, Seek in vain.

Those who love Christ are such as are born again, and have a spiritual and experimental knowledge of him—who believe in him, have seen his loveliness, and have had his love shed abroad in their hearts. The love with which they love Christ is cordial and sincere. This points out and describes the persons who may be assured of the love of Christ to them, since their love to him springs from his to them, which causes all things, even afflictions, to work together for their good. And those that seek him in the use of means, the word and ordinances, and as assisted by his Spirit and grace, for pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation,

which are only to be had in him, shall find him. And they may be said to seek him early who seek him in the morning of youth, or in the first place, above all things else; such always are successful, they find Christ and life, righteousness and salvation in him, and every blessing, and therefore are happy.—(27.)

They shall be happy in this world, or in that which is infinitely better. They shall have as much riches and honour as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them. Those that have their wealth from God's blessing on their industry, and a heart to do good with it, have riches and righteousness. They are durable riches; wealth gotten by vanity will soon be diminished, but that which is well got will wear well; and that which is well spent in works of piety and charity, is put out to the best interest, and so will be durable. They shall have that which is infinitely better, if they have not riches and honour in this world.

They shall be happy in the grace of God now; that shall be their guide in the good way. This shows us, and goes before us in the way that God would have us walk in, and which will certainly bring us to our desired end. Christ by his Spirit guides believers into all truth, and so leads them in the way of righteousness, and they walk after the Spirit.

They shall be happy in the glory of God hereafter. The happiness of those that love God, and devote themselves to his service, is substance itself; a happiness which will subsist of itself, and stand alone, without the supports of outward conveniences; spiritual and eternal things are the only real and substantial things. Joy in God is solid and well grounded; their inheritance hereafter is substantial, Heb. 10. 34; all their happiness they have as heirs, it is grounded upon their sonship. It is satisfying; it is not vain shadows. Things of this world may fill men's bellies, Ps. 17. 14, but not their souls' treasures; they cannot secure to themselves goods for many years, perhaps they may be deprived of them this night; but let the treasures of the soul be ever so capacious, there is enough in God, and Christ, and heaven to fill them. In Wisdom's promises believers have goods laid up, not for days and years, but for eternity; her fruit therefore is better than gold.

12. I present the knowledge of discreet things.
—Holden.

Ver. 22—31. *Christ one with the Father, cooperating in the creation of the world, and rejoicing in the prospect of his work for the salvation of man.*

All Divine revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ; and here we are told who and what he is—as God, designed in the eternal counsels to be the Mediator between God and man. The best exposition of these verses we have in John 1. 1—4, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Son of God was, in the eternal counsels of God, designed and advanced to be the Wisdom and Power of the Father, Light and Life, and all in all, both in the creation and in the redemption of the world.

That he was brought forth as to his being, and set up as to the Divine counsels concerning his office, before the world was made, is here set forth in a great variety of expressions. Here, the Son of God declares himself to have been engaged in the creation of the world. By him God made the worlds, Eph. 3. 9; Heb. 1. 2; Col. 1. 16. When at the creation, in the beginning of time, God with a word produced the world, this eternal Wisdom was that almighty Word. How able, how fit is the Son of God to be the Saviour of the world, who was the Creator of it!

Observe, not only the infinite love of the Father to the Son, but the good understanding between them, ver. 30, concerning the work of man's redemption, which the Son was to undertake. He was his Father's Delight, Isa. 42. 1, and he also rejoiced always before him. This may be understood, 1. Of the infinite delight which the persons of the blessed Trinity have in each other. 2. Of the pleasure which the Father took in the operations of the Son, when he made the world; God saw every thing that the Son made, and, behold, it was very good. And the Son also did himself rejoice before him in the beauty and harmony of the whole creation, Ps. 104. 31. 3. Of the satisfaction they had in each other, with reference to the great work of man's redemption. The Father delighted in the Son, as Mediator between him and man; was well pleased with what he proposed, Matt. 3. 17, and therefore loved him, because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep; he put a confidence in him, that he would go through his work. The Son also rejoiced always before him, delighted to do his will, Ps.

40. 8, and kept close to his undertaking, as one that was well satisfied in it.

See the gracious concern he had for mankind, ver. 31. Wisdom rejoiced, not so much in the rich products of the earth, or the treasures hid in it, as in the habitable parts of it; not only in the creation of man, Gen. 1. 26, but in the redemption and salvation of man. The Son of God was ordained, before the world, to that great work, 1 Pet. 1. 20. A remnant of the sons of men were given him to be brought, through his grace, to his glory, and those were they in whom his delights were. His church was the habitable part of his earth, made habitable for him, that the Lord God might dwell even among them that had been rebellious; and this he rejoiced in, in the prospect of seeing his seed. Though he foresaw all the difficulties he was to meet with in his work, the services and sufferings he was to go through, yet, because it would issue in the glory of his Father, and the salvation of those sons of men that were given him, he rejoiced in anticipating the glory that should follow his agonies, and in the delight he should for ever take in his redeemed people, the trophies of his victories, the monuments of his love. And did he and doth he delight in the thought of thus saving us wretched sinners? And did the Father, on this account especially, delight in his beloved Son? And shall not we delight in him and in his salvation? We have all the encouragement we can desire to come to him, and to rely upon him for all the benefits designed us by his glorious undertaking.

23. Wisdom here declares, I was set up, or, I was anointed from everlasting. This is strictly applicable to the Divine Word, who was anointed by the effusion of the Spirit to the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; who was invested with power and dignity from everlasting; and who, from all eternity, derived his existence from the Father, for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col. 2. 9.—*Holden.*

30. Then I, the Fabricator, was by him; and I was his daily delight, rejoicing always in his sight.—*Holden.*

Ver. 32—36. *Exhortations to hear Christ's words as the only way to obtain life, and to avoid ruin.*

We have here the application of Wisdom's discourse. Let Wisdom's children justify Wisdom by hearkening to her, and show themselves to be indeed her children. Surely with the docility of children we should hearken to Christ's voice—yea, the youngest that can read, hear, and understand at all, should receive his

instructions with thankful, joyful, and obedient hearts.

Let us all then hear instruction and be wise, and not refuse such surprising mercy. For blessed are they who hear the Saviour's voice; patiently watching and waiting at his gates, by daily reading, meditation, and prayer, by constantly attending his ordinances. Christians surely may, consistently with other duties, redeem time for waiting at Wisdom's gate in public services on week days. The children of the world find time for vain amusements without neglecting what *they* deem the one thing needful. Does it not show contempt of Wisdom's instructions when people professing godliness seek excuses for neglecting the means of grace? Let us observe our Lord's directions, seek increasing acquaintance with his grace, and to experience it more fully. The more diligent we are, the happier we shall be; for whoso findeth him, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.

Christ is Wisdom, and he that finds Christ, that obtains an interest in him, he finds life; for Christ is Life to all believers; he that has the Son of God has life, eternal life, and he shall obtain favour of the Lord, who is well pleased with all those that are in Christ; nor can we obtain God's favour, unless we find Christ, and be found in him; and those that seek him shall not seek in vain.

Those who reject Wisdom are left to ruin themselves. Those who offend Christ do the greatest wrong to themselves; they wrong their own souls; they deceive themselves, and destroy themselves: sin is a wrong to the soul. Those who are at variance with Christ, are in love with their own ruin; Those who hate me, love death; they love that which will be their death, and put that from them, which would be their life. Sinners die because they will die, which will for ever justify God when he judges. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1—12. *The invitations of Wisdom—How they are received.*

The Divine Majesty of Christ, and the excellence of his instructions, demand our obedient attention, and the provisions of his grace to supply our perishing wants should endear his invitations to us.

By Wisdom's house is to be understood

the heavenly house, or rather the church which Christ has erected in this world. This house and feast is opposed to that mentioned, ch. 7. 8. The ministers of God are often called pillars, seven means many, showing the stability of God's house.—(54.)

Christ has prepared ordinances for the reception and entertainment of those that believe in him, as well as mansions in heaven for them hereafter. The sacrifice of his death, which was prefigured by the offerings of bulls and goats, is a rich and ample provision for them. The ministers of the gospel go forth to invite the guests. He that is simple is invited, that he may be made wise; and he that wants a heart, so the word is, let him come hither, and he shall have one. Whosoever he be, the invitation is general, and excludes none that do not exclude themselves. Our Saviour came, not to call the righteous, but sinners; not the wise in their own eyes, who say they see, John 9. 41.

We are invited to taste of the true pleasures that are to be found in the knowledge and fear of God. By faith on the promises of the gospel, applying them to ourselves, and taking the comfort of them, we feed, we feast upon the provisions Christ has made for poor souls. What we eat and drink we make our own, and are nourished and refreshed by it, and so are our souls by the word of God.

Would we partake of Wisdom's feast, we must renounce the society and foolish pleasures of the ungodly, or we never can enjoy the pleasures of a holy life, or go in the way of understanding. It is vain to continue acquaintance with wicked men in the hope of doing them good; we are far more likely to be corrupted by them. It is not enough to forsake the foolish, we must join those that walk in wisdom, and walk in the same spirit and steps.

We must be contented with a declaration of the truth before those who show a profane contempt of the word, but not persist in rebukes, which only induce altercations, and exasperate. Nothing can, in general, be expected from reproving a scorner but reproach, contempt, and hatred. But there is encouragement to take the same labour and freedom with those who are wise enough to value instructions. A disposition to be taught is a proof of wisdom; the wiser men are, the better will they take reproof, and the more will they profit by it; so that our attention

should be peculiarly directed to those who seem inclined to profit by our addresses.

The knowledge of holy things is understanding the things pertaining to the service of God, that pertain unto our sanctification. Or, the knowledge which holy men have, which was taught by the holy prophets: this is the best and most useful understanding, and will turn to the best account.

Or it is, The knowledge of the Holy One; the nature of the aphorism, and the manner in which the word is parallel to Jehovah in the first line, show that it signifies the Triune God.—(36.)

As the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, we should observe where this is in men's hearts, that we may lead them forward in the knowledge of God, and to acquaintance with the Saviour, wherein all true wisdom and understanding subsists, and whereby all the blessings of time and eternity are communicated. There is no true wisdom but in the way of religion, and no true life but in the end of that way.

Let them know what will be the consequence of their choosing, or refusing, this fair offer. Here is the happiness of those that embrace it; If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself. A man cannot be profitable to God; it is to our own good. Those who are wise for their souls, are wise for themselves, for the soul is the man; nor do any consult their own true interest, but those who are truly religious. Observe the shame and ruin of those who slight it. Thou shalt bear the blame. God is not the Author of sin; Satan can only tempt, he cannot force; and wicked companions are but his instruments; so that all the fault lies on the sinner himself. Thou shalt bear the loss of that which thou scornest: it will be to thine own destruction, and the consideration of this will aggravate thy condemnation. All who hear the gospel should consider that life and death are set before them, and that they are most deeply interested in the choice.

Ver. 13—18. *The invitations of folly, and the doom of those who accept them.*

We have heard Christ's invitations to godliness; here we are told how industrious the tempter is to seduce unwary souls into sin. The tempter is a foolish woman. Folly herself, in opposition to Wisdom.—Carnal, sensual pleasure is the great inlet to vice; it stupifies con-

science, and puts out the sparks of conviction, more than any thing else. This tempter is here described to be very ignorant; she has no sufficient, solid reason to offer; where she gets dominion in a soul, she works out all the knowledge of holy things, they are lost and forgotten. She is very importunate, very violent and pressing, continually haunting people with her enticements.

We need to seek and pray for true wisdom with great earnestness, for Satan has emissaries of various kinds to withdraw our souls from Christ. Not only worldly lusts and abandoned seducers prove fatal rivals to Christ for the souls of men; but false teachers, with doctrines that flatter the pride and give liberty to lusts, compass the destruction of multitudes. They especially draw off such as have received some serious impressions, and are disposed to do many things, but are not experimentally acquainted with the truth in the love and in the power of it. They are allured with hopes of gratifying their favourite passions, and their propensity to covet forbidden objects is readily wrought upon. Thus they are drawn aside into the ways of error.

He that so far wants understanding, as to be drawn aside by these enticements, is led on, ignorantly, to his own inevitable ruin. He knows not, will not believe, does not consider; the tempter will not let him know that the dead are there, that those who live in pleasure are dead while they live, dead in trespasses and sins. The depths of Satan are the depths of hell; remorseless sin is remediless ruin, it is the bottomless pit already. Solomon shows the hook; those that believe him, will not meddle with the bait.

Behold the wretched, empty, unsatisfying, deceitful, and stolen pleasures sin proposes, and may our souls be so hungering and thirsting and longing for the everlasting enjoyment of Christ, that we may live to him, daily, here, by faith, and ere long in the possession of him in glory.—(37.)

CHAPTER X.

Here commences the second part of the book. The former chapters are more in the form of a continued discourse, in which the nature and excellence of wisdom are depicted. The remainder of the book contains the dictates of wisdom

expressed in short, terse, antithetic sentences, for the most part unconnected, yet forming a code of moral aphorisms, unrivalled for depth of thought, acuteness of observation, purity of sentiment, and force of expression.—(36.)

The parallels of which they consist are antithetic of various degrees, from those in which word is contrasted with word through the whole sentence, to those in which there is only something of opposition in the two propositions.—(30.)

And through the whole of the proverbs we are taught to look beyond the surface, for what further than the first or most obvious sense the passage may without violence imply, and this we shall find to be Christ. He is the Wisdom so often spoken of in this book, and for which the proverbs are given.—(37.)

1. The comfort of parents much depends upon the conduct of their children, and this suggests to both powerful motives to their duties. Mothers especially have much care about their offspring, it is therefore especially cruel to occasion them distress. Let parents consult their good rather than indulge them.

2, 3. Riches gained by oppression or fraud, or spent in wickedness, do no real good to the possessor, but righteousness secures from the fatal effects of death; and though the righteous may be poor as to this world, the Lord will not suffer him to want what is needful for spiritual life.

4. In the affairs of our souls, as well as in our worldly affairs, slothfulness and hypocrisy lead to spiritual poverty, but those who are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, are likely to be rich in faith, and rich in good works.

5. Here is the just praise of those who improve their opportunities, who take pains to gather and increase what they have, both for soul and body, who provide for hereafter, while provision is to be made. Here is the just reproach and blame of those who trifle away opportunities. He who gets knowledge and wisdom in the days of his youth, gathers in summer, and he will have the comfort and credit of it; but he who idles away the days of his youth, will bear the shame of it when he is old.

6. Abundance of blessings shall visibly abide on the head of good men; real blessings. But consciousness of guilt will stop the mouths of the wicked at God's

tribunal, like men whose mouths are covered or stopped when led to execution

7. Both the just and the wicked must die; between their bodies, in the grave, there is no visible difference; but between their souls, in the world of spirits, there is a vast difference; and so there is between their memories that survive them.

8. The wise in heart reduces his knowledge to practice; but the fool while eager to talk upon all subjects neglects the plainest and most important duties.

9. The upright believer goes straight forward in the plain path of sincerity, honesty, and piety, thus he is safe and free from perplexing fears; but dissemblers, after all their shuffling and subtility, will be exposed here or hereafter.

10. Trick and artifice will be no excuse for iniquity, but the sinner must either repent or be ruined by it. Those whose sins go before unto judgment shall fall.

11. The good man's mouth is always open to teach, comfort, and correct others, like a flowing spring which cannot be stopped. The iniquity of the wicked, wounding their consciences, closes their mouths with shame and fear.—(16.)

12. Where there is hatred, every thing excites contentions. The least slip will be resented and aggravated; the best meant words or actions will be misrepresented or misunderstood. But where love prevails, mistakes and offences will be overlooked or speedily forgiven. By bearing with each other, and making the best of every thing, strife is prevented, peace and harmony are preserved.

13. He who has that good understanding which they have that do the commandments, wisdom is found in his lips; it is discovered to be there, and it is derived thence for the benefit of others. But they that foolishly and wilfully go on in wicked ways, prepare rods for themselves, the marks of which will be their perpetual disgrace.

14. Whatever knowledge may be at any time useful to us, we must lay it up. We must continue laying up as long as we live; and be sure to lay it up safe, that it may not be to seek when we want it. Fools soon speak out all they know without regarding consequences, by which they do mischief and ruin themselves.

The wise gain this wisdom by reading the bible, by hearing the word, by meditating, by conversation, by observation and experience, by prayer, by faith in

Christ, who is made of God unto us wisdom.—(46.)

15. Taking pains is the way to make ourselves and families easy. Or, rather, this represents the common mistakes both of rich and poor, concerning their outward condition. Rich people think themselves happy because they are rich; but it is their mistake; they are not so safe as they imagine; their wealth may expose them to danger. Poor people think themselves undone because they are poor; but it is their mistake; a poor man may live comfortably, if he be content, keep a good conscience, and live by faith.

16. Perhaps a righteous man has no more than what he works hard for, but that labour tends to life; he aims at nothing but to get an honest livelihood, and covets not to be rich and great. Or, it may be meant of his labour in religion; he takes most pains in that which has a tendency to eternal life; he sows to the Spirit, that he may reap life everlasting. Perhaps a wicked man's wealth is fruit which he came easily by, but it tends to sin; he makes it the food and fuel of his lusts; he does hurt with it, and not good; he gets hurt by it, and is hardened by it.

17. Those are in the right, who keep instruction for their use, that they may govern themselves by it, and keep it for the benefit of others, that they may instruct them. Those are in the wrong who not only do not receive instruction, but wilfully and obstinately refuse it when it is offered them. The traveller that has missed his way, and cannot bear to be told of it, and showed the right way, must needs err still; he certainly misses the way of life.

18. Lying lips have peculiar malignity when they are made a cloak of maliciousness. He is especially a fool who thinks to hide any thing from God; and malice is no better when it is vented in spiteful and mischievous language.

19. Usually, they that speak much, speak much amiss; among many words there cannot but be many idle words, which they must shortly give an account of. Repentance will be wanted where there wanteth not sin. He that often checks himself is a wise man; it is an evidence of his wisdom, and he therein consults his own peace.

20, 21. The tongue of the just is as choice silver; they are sincere, freed from

the dross of guile and evil design. God's words are compared to silver purified, Ps. 12. 6; and such are the words of just men. The lips of the righteous feed many; for they are full of the word of God, which is the bread of life. Pious discourse is spiritual food to the needy.

The heart of the wicked is little worth. His principles, his notions, his thoughts, his purposes, and all that fills him, and affects him, are worldly and carnal, and therefore of no value. Fools die for want of wisdom; fools indeed they are, to die for want of that which they might easily obtain. Fools die for want of a heart, so the word is; for want of consideration and resolution.

22. We are told here what that wealth is, which is indeed desirable; having no sorrow with it; no disquieting care to get and keep it; no vexation of spirit in the enjoyment, no tormenting grief for the loss of it; no guilt contracted by the abuse of it. To have it, and to have a heart to take the comfort of it; to do good with it, and to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the use of it. This desirable wealth is to be expected; not by making ourselves drudges to the world, Ps. 127. 2, but by the blessing of God. What comes from the love of God, has the grace of God for its companion, to preserve the soul from those turbulent lusts and passions of which, otherwise, the increase of riches is the incentive. In spiritual riches diligence in getting them is our duty, but God's blessing and grace must have all the glory of that which is acquired, Deut. 8. 17, 18.

23. Foolish and wicked men divert themselves with injuring others or tempting them to sin; whatever sin they can commit with impunity is to them a laughing matter; but a man of understanding delights in wisdom, as they in mischief.

24. The worst dread which a wicked man ever feels, of future punishment, will assuredly come upon him; and the largest desires the righteous can form, of spiritual and eternal blessings, will assuredly be granted.

25. The course of prosperous sinners resembles the brief fury of a whirlwind, which soon spends itself and is gone. But the righteous has an everlasting foundation, trusting in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.

26. As vinegar, or the sour grape, sets the teeth on edge; and as the smoke

causes the eyes to smart, so the sluggard is a continual vexation to his employer.

27, 28. What man is he that loves life? Let him fear God, and that will secure him from many things that would prejudice his life; secure to him life enough in this world, and eternal life in the other. What man is he that would see good days? Let him be religious, for the hope of the righteous shall be gladness. It is something future, lasting, and unseen they place happiness in, Rom. 8. 24, 25; their hope will be swallowed up in enjoyment. But the years of the wicked, that are spent in the pleasures of sin and the drudgery of the world, shall be shortened. And whatever comfort or happiness a wicked man promises himself, in this world or the other, his hope shall be turned into endless despair.

29. By uprightly walking in the way of the Lord, habits of obedience acquire strength. The believer grows stronger in faith and grace, and goes forward with increasing vigour and delight. Ruin and destruction certainly follow wickedness.

30. The righteous shall never be removed. They that have an established virtue, have an established peace and happiness which nothing can rob them of; they have an everlasting foundation. The wicked would be glad to have this earth for their perpetual home and inheritance, but it cannot be so. They must die and leave all their idols behind them.

31, 32. It is the proof and the praise of a man's wisdom and goodness, that he speaks wisely. A good man, in his discourse, brings forth wisdom for the benefit of others; and he, in gratitude for that gift, and justice to the Giver, does good with it, and edifies many. He knows what is acceptable, what discourse will be pleasing to God; what will become him and benefit the hearers. But it is the sin, and will be the ruin, of a wicked man, that he speaks what is displeasing to God, and provoking to those he converses with; and the froward tongue shall be cut off, as surely as the flattering tongue.

We have no reason to envy the wicked his transitory happiness and fame. The righteous on the contrary is built on the Rock of ages, he is kept by the power of God; and neither principalities nor powers, life, death, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.—(46.)

CHAPTER XI.

1. The righteous God will in no case suffer his subjects to defraud each other with impunity. However light men may make of such practices as giving short weight or measure; however common such crimes may be; however they may now escape detection and punishment, they are an abomination to the Lord. They are utterly inconsistent with godliness, and will be produced at the day of judgment as decisive proofs of the hypocrisy of many a mere professor.

2. Pride is entirely opposed to repentance, faith, and obedience; it leads to infidelity or vain self-confidence, which will surely end in everlasting shame and contempt. Considering how safe, and quiet, and easy they are, that are of a humble spirit, what communion they have with God, and comfort in themselves, we see that with the lowly is wisdom.

3. The integrity of an honest man will be his guide, in the way of duty, and the way of safety. His principles are fixed, his rule is certain, and therefore his way is plain; his sincerity keeps him steady. The perverseness of sinners will be their destruction.

4. The day of death will be a day of wrath; it is a messenger of God's wrath. Riches will stand men in no stead in that day; they will neither put by the stroke, nor ease the pain, much less take out the sting. Also in the day of public judgments, riches often expose men rather than protect them, Ezek. 7. 19. Righteousness only will deliver from the evil of death, and take off the terror of it.

5. A living principle of honesty and grace will be our best direction in the right way, in every doubtful case, and our best deliverance from every false way. The ways of wickedness are dangerous and destructive. Their sin will be their punishment; that by which they contrived to shelter themselves, will make against them.

7. Wicked men may keep up an expectation of happiness when they die, or happiness in this world; but in death their expectation will be frustrated. When a godly man dies, his expectations are out-done, and all his fears vanish; but when a wicked man dies, his hopes vanish.

8. The righteous are often wonderfully prevented from going into dangerous situations, and the ungodly go in their stead; this is the secret disposal of God's provi-

dence. The righteous are often removed by death before overwhelming calamities.

9. Hypocrites delude men into error and sin by plausible professions and insinuations against the truths and precepts of God's word. But the believer by his experimental knowledge of the truth, and his established judgment therein will be preserved from such delusions.

10, 11. The impiety, rashness, and wicked counsel of ungodly rulers hasten the ruin of cities and kingdoms. Men therefore should rejoice when the righteous are exalted to places of trust and power, as nations prosper when wicked men are cast down and punished for their crimes.

12. A self-conceited man is always disposed to express his contempt of others. But a man of understanding does not judge of others by their success. What he sees blamable he mentions with caution and candour.

13. Whatever is intrusted to the tale-bearer, whether false or true, without considering consequences, he reveals. But a faithful man will not disclose what he is intrusted with, or what he may have discovered, which affects the peace and safety of others, unless the honour of God and the real good of society require it.

14. In all our affairs we shall often find it to our advantage to advise with others; if they agree, our way will be the more clear; if they differ, we shall hear what is to be said on all sides, and be better able to determine.

15. Friendship or charity may on some occasions make it a duty to become a surety, but the welfare of our families, our own peace, and ability to pay just debts must not be brought into danger. If the scripture thus condemns those who risk their substance in prodigality that has some tincture of generosity in it, how worthy of condemnation are the unfaithful stewards who spend their masters' substance in extravagant and sinful excesses! And especially let us consider how infinite was the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in becoming surety even for enemies! He smarted under agonies unknown in this world, and was impoverished for our sakes, though possessed of unsearchable riches.—(46.)

16. A pious and discreet woman will be as careful of her character and reputation as powerful men are of their riches.

She will retain esteem and respect, as strong men retain possession of wealth.

17. A merciful man makes and keeps himself easy; he has the pleasure of doing his duty, and contributing to the comfort of those that are to him as his own soul. He that waters others with his temporal good things, God will water him with his spiritual blessings, which he will find to do the best good to his own soul: see Isa. 58. 7, &c. A cruel, froward, ill-natured man, troubles his own flesh, his sin becomes his punishment. He is vexatious to those that are, and should be, to him as his own flesh, Eph. 5. 29.

Or, his flesh is mentioned, to intimate that the mischiefs of his covetousness shall not only fall upon his soul which he despiseth, but upon his flesh, or outward man, which is the only thing he feareth.—(54.)

18. Sinners put a most fatal cheat upon themselves; the wicked man builds himself a house upon the sand, which will deceive him when the storm comes; he promises himself that by his sin, which he will never gain. He that makes it his business to do good, shall have a sure reward; it is made as sure to him as eternal truth can make it.

19. True holiness is true happiness; it is a preparative for it, a pledge and earnest of it. Righteousness inclines, disposes, and leads the soul to life. The more violent a man is in sinful pursuits, the more eager he is upon his own destruction; he hastens it.

20. Nothing is more offensive to God than hypocrisy and double-dealing, which are signified by the word that we translate frowardness. Nothing is more pleasing to God than sincerity and plain dealing. God delights in such as aim and act with integrity, such as have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom.

21. Confederacies in sin shall be broken, and shall not avail to protect the sinners. Though justice may come slowly to punish the wicked, and mercy may come slowly to save the righteous, yet both will come surely.

22. It is lamentable that beauty should be so abused as it is by those that have not discretion or modesty with it. This may be applied to all other bodily endowments and accomplishments.

22. Rings and jewels were worn in the nose as

ornaments in ancient times, and are now sometimes worn so in the east.

23. The righteous desire that it may go well with all about them; their desire is not to gratify any evil lust, but to obtain God's favour, and to preserve peace of conscience. The wicked would have wrath; they desire mischief to others, but it shall return upon themselves.

24. A man may grow poor by meanly sparing what he has, withholding more than is meet, not paying just debts, not relieving the poor, not allowing necessary expenses. This tends to poverty; it cramps men's industry, weakens their interest, destroys their credit, and forfeits the blessing of God: and let men be ever so saving of what they have, if God so appoints, it comes to nothing.

25. We are so backward to works of charity, and so ready to think that giving undoes us, that we need to have it very much pressed upon us, how much it is for our own advantage to do good to others. Both in temporal and spiritual things God commonly deals with his people, according to the measure wherewith they deal with their brethren.

26. We must not hoard up the gifts of God's bounty, merely for our own advantage, but we must bring them forth for the benefit of others. It is a sin, when corn is scarce, to withhold it, in hopes that it will still grow dearer, when it is already so high, that the poor suffer by it.

27. Those that are industrious to do good in the world procure favour; and, which is better, they receive God's loving kindness. Those that are industrious to do mischief, prepare ruin for themselves. Seeking mischief is here set in opposition to seeking good; for those that are not doing good, are doing hurt.

28. The true believer is a branch of the living Vine. Our riches will fail us when we are in the greatest need; he that trusts in them, as if they would secure him the favour of God, and be his protection and portion, shall fall, as a man who lays his weight on a broken reed. Righteousness will stand us in stead when our riches fail us. When those that take root in the world wither, those that are grafted into Christ, and partake of his root, shall be fruitful and flourishing.

29. He who brings trouble upon himself and his family, either by carelessness, slothfulness, prodigality, or by any wickedness that consumes his estate, or by

covetous desires and restless cares to heap up riches, shall be as unable to keep and enjoy what he gets, as a man is unable to hold the wind, or to feed and satisfy himself with it.—(54.)

It is very fit that the fool should be servant to the wise in heart. Let this remind us that we are bound to submit our wills to the will of God, and to be subject to him, because we are fools, and he is infinitely wise.

30. The righteous are as trees of life; the fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples, and prayers, their interest in heaven, and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many.

31. Even the righteous, when they offend, shall be recompensed on earth with sharp corrections; much more then will the wicked meet at length the due reward of their impiety and iniquity. Let us then earnestly seek those blessings which our Surety purchased for us by his sufferings and death; let us study his instructions, seeking to copy his example and to keep his commandments.

31. The Greek version is, If the righteous man scarcely escapeth; where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? It is thus quoted 1 Pet. 4. 18.

CHAPTER XII.

1. Those who have grace, and love it, will delight in the instructions given them. Those who love a faithful ministry, value it, and sit under it with pleasure, make it to appear that they love knowledge. He that hates reproof, is not only foolish, but brutish. Those that desire to live in families and societies, where they may be under no check; that stifle their convictions, and count those their enemies who tell them the truth, are here meant.

2. Those are happy, truly happy, for ever happy, that obtain favour of the Lord, though the world frown upon them, for in God's favour is life. But the man who covers selfish and vicious designs under a profession of religion, friendship, or affection, will be condemned of God.

3. Though men may advance themselves by sinful arts, they cannot by such arts settle and secure themselves. That prosperity which is raised by sin, is built on the sand, and so it will appear. Though good men may have but little of the world, yet that little will last. The root of

the righteous shall not be moved, though their branches may be shaken. Those that by faith are rooted in Christ, are firmly fixed; in him their comfort and happiness are firmly rooted.

4. A virtuous woman, that is pious and prudent, ingenious and industrious, active for the good of her family, and looks well to the ways of her household, who makes conscience of her duty in every relation, and can bear crosses without disturbance; such a one is not only an honour to her husband, as a crown is an ornament, but supports his authority as a crown is an ensign of power. She that is the reverse of this, ruins both the credit and comfort of her husband; he is continually uneasy; it is an affliction that preys much upon him, and consumes him.

5. The word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake, if we imagine that thoughts are free; they are under the Divine cognizance, and therefore under the Divine command. We ought to be observers of the thoughts and intents of our own hearts, and to judge of ourselves by them. When evil thoughts intrude they are burdens to the good, who do not indulge them till they are ripened into bad projects and resolutions. It is a man's shame to act with deceit, with trick and design.

6. Wicked people speak mischief to their neighbours. Hence wars, oppressions, and persecutions. Good men speak help, particularly to those whom the wicked lie in wait for. A man may sometimes do a very good work with one good word.

7. The moderate prosperity of godly men stands on a firm basis, and by God's blessing is often continued to their posterity, while the wicked are overthrown.

8. The desire of respect is natural to man; this hindered many from following the Saviour, but the apostles showed their wisdom by glorying in shame for the name of Christ. We should frequently think on the day of judgment which will set the seal on all characters.—(46.)

9. He that lives in an obscure condition in the world, who (as in the margin) hath no one to wait upon him, but gets bread by his own labours, is happier than he that glories in high birth or gay attire, and wants necessities.—(54.)

* Many who have been brought up in a manner disproportioned to their means are too proud to employ themselves in any inferior occupation, and thus pain

themselves and injure others to maintain a vain appearance. But those who have what is needful, without mean dependence, are more happy and respectable.

10. A godly man is merciful, and would not put even an animal to needless pain, or abuse the useful creatures which conduce to the comfort of life. But the wicked often speak of others as well used when they could not endure like treatment for a single day. Often they lavish outward favours to murder the soul, are prodigal to the worthless, and harsh towards the industrious. They weep at tales of imaginary woe, but are callous to real misery.

11. It is men's wisdom to mind their business, and follow an honest calling. Even the sentence of wrath has this mercy in it, Thou shalt eat bread. It is folly to neglect business; the grace of God teaches men to submit to his providence and to disdain nothing but sin.

12. When the ungodly see others prosper by their iniquity they wish they could act with the same ingenuity and obtain the like opportunities. But the root of Divine grace, in the heart of the righteous, produces other desires and purposes.

13. Many a man has paid dear in this world for the transgression of his lips. The righteous extricate themselves when God in mercy comes in for their succour. It is intimated, that the just may come into trouble; but they shall not be utterly cast down.

14. By a well-ordered tongue, we may be useful in winning souls to Christ, in teaching the ignorant, strengthening the weak, and making the mourners to rejoice. When men use their tongues in this manner, they enjoy acceptance through Christ Jesus, and the testimony of their conscience that they have in some measure answered the end of their being. Let our words then be ordered in the fear of God, and with a view to the account that will be taken of them, by our own conscience and by our Judge. Our actions must be under the same influence, that we may not condemn ourselves as dissembling hypocrites.—(46.)

15. A fool in the sense of scripture means a wicked man, one who acts contrary to the wisdom that is from above.—(33.)

See what keeps a fool from being wise. He thinks he is in the right, and therefore asks no advice; he is confident he knows

the way, and therefore never inquires. The rule he goes by, is, to do that which is right in his own eyes. It is a sign that he is wise, and is likely to continue so, whose ear is always open to good advice.

16. A foolish man is soon angry, and is hasty in expressing it; he is ever in trouble and running into mischief. But a wise man stifles resentment, and avoids words and actions of which he would afterwards be ashamed. Or, he covers the provocation that is given, even as much as may be from himself, that he may not carry his resentment too far. It is a kindness to ourselves to extenuate injuries and affronts, instead of making the worst of them, as we are apt to do.

17. He that makes conscience of speaking truth, and representing every thing fairly, makes it to appear that he is governed by the principles of righteousness. We are all concerned to possess a dread and detestation of the sin of lying, with a reigning principle of honesty.

18. Slanders wound the reputation of those of whom they are uttered, and perhaps incurably; whisperings and evil surmises, like a sword, separate those that have been dearest to each other. The tongue of the wise is health, making all whole again, restoring peace, and persuading to reconciliation.

19. If truth be spoken, it will hold good, and, whoever may be disobliged by it, and angry at it, it will keep its ground. Those that make a lie their refuge, will find it a refuge of lies.

20. Malice and mischief are always attended with dissimulation, and produce terrors and perplexities. But those who consult the peace and happiness of others have joy and serenity in their own minds.

21. If men are sincerely righteous, the righteous God has engaged that no evil shall happen to them. Though tempted, they shall not be overcome. And though they may come into troubles, these shall be overruled to work for their good. Wickedness is as sure a destruction. Sinners will be more and more mischievous, filled with all unrighteousness, Rom. 1. 29. Or, they that delight in mischief, shall have enough of it.

22. We are here taught to hate lying, because it is an abomination to the Lord. And to make conscience of truth, not only in our words, but in all our actions; because those that deal truly and sincerely are his delight.

23. The prudent man makes no vain displays of his knowledge. But foolish men, while they make a show of all their scanty stock, proclaim to all the world the folly and emptiness of their minds.

24. Diligence advances a man. He that has been faithful in a few things, shall be made ruler over many things. Those who, because they will not take pains in an honest calling, live by shifts, and arts of dishonesty, are paltry and beggarly, and will be kept under.

25. A load of care, and fear, and sorrow, upon the spirits, depressing them, deprives them of vigour in what is to be done, or courage in what is to be borne. Those inclined to it, should watch and pray against it. The cure of it. A good word from God, applied by faith, makes the heart glad; such a word as that, Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; the good word of God, the gospel, is designed to make hearts glad, that are weary and heavy laden, Matt. 11. 28.

26. The righteous is more abundant than his neighbour, so the margin; he is richer, though not in this world's goods, yet in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, which are the true riches. Wicked men walk in a way which seems to them not only pleasant, but the right way; it is so agreeable to flesh and blood, that they flatter themselves it cannot be amiss.

27. The slothful man makes no good use of the advantages Providence puts in his way, and has no comfort of them. If at any time he makes a vigorous exertion, he loses all the benefit of it by want of perseverance. Or, if slothful, deceitful men have gained any thing, they have no comfort in the enjoyment of it. The substance of a diligent man, though not great, comes from the blessing of God; he has comfort in it; it does him good, and his family. He sees that God gives it him in answer to his prayer.

28. The way of religion is a straight, plain, easy way; it is the way of righteousness; God's commands are all holy, just, and good; it is a path-way, a way which God has cast up for us, Isa. 35. 8, it is a highway, tracked before us by all the saints. There is not only life at the end, but life in the way; all true comfort and satisfaction. The favour of God, which is better than life; the Spirit, who is life.

The death of them that die in the Lord is only a sleep, 1 Thess. 4. 14, for

Christ hath abolished death and secured endless life to them that believe in him. There is nothing that can subject the righteous man to the curse of the first, or the power of the second death. Nothing can deprive him of that life which is hid with Christ in God. What man is he that desireth immortal life? Let him enter into the new and living way. There let him walk, and in it he shall find no death.—(46.)

CHAPTER XIII.

1. There is great hope of those that have reverence for their parents. He is a wise son, and is in a fair way to be wiser, that hears his father's instruction, desires to hear it, regards it, and complies with it. There is little hope of those that will not hear rebuke with patience, but scoff at those that deal faithfully with them.

2. Inward comfort and satisfaction will be daily bread; it will be a continual feast to those who delight in that communication which is to the use of edifying. Violence done, will recoil upon him that does it. By our words we must be justified or condemned, Matt. 12. 37.

3. He that is cautious, that thinks before he speaks, that, if he have thought evil, suppresses it, keeps his soul from a great deal both of guilt and grief, and saves many bitter reflections on himself, and of others upon him. There is many a one ruined by an ungoverned tongue.

4. The slothful desire the gains which the diligent get, but hate the pains which the diligent take; and therefore it follows, They have nothing. The diligent shall have abundance. This is especially true in spiritual affairs.

5. Every righteous man hates lying, all sin, and particularly all fraud and falsehood; he abhors it from a rooted reigning principle of love to truth and justice, and conformity to God. Where sin reigns, the man is loathsome. If his eyes were open, and his conscience awake, he would be so to himself, he would abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes.

6. An honest desire to do right preserves a man from fatal mistakes or extremes, better than a thousand casuistical distinctions; while the lusts of wicked men cloud their minds and hurry them to measures by which they are overthrown.

7. This is applicable, 1. To men's worldly

estate. Some that are really poor, would be thought rich; they trade and spend as if they were rich, when, if all debts were paid, they are not worth anything. This is sin, and will be shame; many a one hereby ruins his family, and brings reproach upon religion. They that thus live above what they have, choose to be subject to their own pride rather than to God's providence, and it will end accordingly. Some that are really rich, would be thought to be poor, because they choose rather to bury what God has given them than to use it, Eccl. 6. 1, 2. In this there is ingratitude to God, injustice to their family and neighbourhood, and uncharitableness to the poor. 2. It is applicable to their spiritual state. Grace is the riches of the soul, it is true riches, but men commonly misrepresent themselves, either designedly, or through mistake, and ignorance of themselves. There are many presuming hypocrites that are really poor, and empty of grace, and yet will not be convinced of their poverty, or pretend to be rich, and will not own their poverty. There are many timorous, trembling christians, that are spiritually rich, and full of grace, and yet think themselves poor, and will not be persuaded that they are rich; by their doubts and fears, their complaints and griefs, they make themselves poor. The former mistake is destroying at last, this is disquieting in the mean time.

8. Great riches often tempt to robbery and violence against those that possess them, or accusations are raised and they are glad to ransom their lives by parting with their treasures. But the poor are free from such perils; none think it worth while to disquiet them, 2 Kings 25. 12.

9. The light of the righteous is as that of the sun, which may be eclipsed and clouded, but will continue; the Spirit is their Light, he gives them a fulness of joy, and rejoices to do them good; that of the wicked is as a lamp of their own kindling, which is easily put out.

10. All contentions, whether between individuals, families, churches, communities, or nations, with all their fatal consequences, are excited and carried forward by pride. Disputes would be easily prevented or ended if pride did not interfere.

11. All wise observers of mankind have remarked that wealth gotten by dishonesty or vice is attended with a secret curse, which will speedily waste it. But

that which is gotten by honest perseverance will be attended with a blessing.

12. The delay of what is anxiously hoped for is very painful to the mind, and obtaining it is peculiarly pleasant. But spiritual blessings are chiefly intended. The deferring of hope while waiting for the tokens of pardoning mercy, or the consolations of the Holy Spirit, may often pain the heart while it proves its sincerity, but we have none else to go to but Him who hath the words of eternal life. On him none will wait in vain. At length the desired peace and joy will be imparted and they are as the fruit of the tree of life to the soul.

13. Those that prefer the rules of carnal policy before Divine precepts, and the allurements of the world and the flesh before God's promises and comforts, despise his word. He that stands in awe of God, and reverences his word, shall not only escape destruction, but shall be rewarded for his godly fear.

14. The law of the wise may mean either the rule by which they regulate their own conduct, or the injunctions they prescribe to others. In both, this law is a fountain yielding life and happiness, and a guide directing men to keep from the snares of death.

15. Those that serve Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are accepted of God, and approved of men, Rom. 14. 17, 18.

The way of sinners is hard upon others, who complain of it, and hard to the sinner himself. The service of sin is perfect slavery, and the road to hell is strewn with the thorns and thistles that are the products of the curse. Vices induce consequences very uneasy to the sinner.

16. It is wisdom to be cautious, not to meddle with that which we have not some knowledge of. It is folly to talk of things we know nothing of, and to undertake that which we are no way fit for.

17. Nothing is more hateful than the treachery of those that have confidence reposed in them. This is applicable to ministers, Christ's messengers and ambassadors; those that are wicked and false to Christ, and the souls of men, do mischief, and fall into mischief; but those that are faithful, find sound words to be healing words, to others and themselves.

18. He that scorns to be taught, will certainly be abased. He that takes it

well to be told of his faults gains respect and avoids disgrace.

19. There are in man strong desires of happiness; God has provided for the accomplishment of those desires, and that would be sweet to the soul, whereas the pleasures of sense are grateful only to the carnal appetite. Yet to fools it is an abomination to depart from evil. Never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls, that will not be persuaded to leave their sins.

20. Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company; A companion of fools shall be broken, so some; shall be known, so the Greek; known to be a fool; he is known by his company. He will be like them, so some; will be made wicked, so others; all that make themselves wicked, will be destroyed.

21. How unavoidable the destruction of sinners; the wrath of God pursues them, and all the terrors of that wrath. Whom God pursues he is sure to overtake. The righteous shall be abundantly recompensed.

22. The servant of God who is not anxious about riches, and disperses in charity, takes the best method of providing for his descendants. If a good man does not leave them much of this world's goods, his prayers, his instructions, his good example, are the best legacy; and the promises of the covenant will be an inheritance to his children's children, Ps. 103. 17.

23. The poor and industrious often thrive though in a homely manner, while those who have inherited large estates are reduced by carelessness or extravagance to poverty for want of judgment.

24. The perverseness of our fallen nature renders discipline necessary to check the growth of sinful passions, which soon begin to shoot forth in children. He therefore acts as if he hated his child, who by false indulgence permits diseases of the mind to gather strength, which will prove the source of sorrow here and misery hereafter. When children are permitted to get the mastery while young, they can scarcely ever be taught due subjection afterwards. Observe, It is the rod of a parent that must be used, directed by wisdom and love, and designed for good. Let this reconcile children to the correction their good parents give them; it is from love, and for their good.

25. It is the happiness of the right-

teous, that they shall have enough, and that they know when they have enough.

Thus as to spiritual things, the righteous feeds upon the word and ordinances to the satisfying of his soul with the promises of the gospel, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of life.—(27.)

It is the misery of the wicked, that, through the insatiableness of their own desires, they are always needy; not only their souls shall not be satisfied with the world and the flesh, but even their sensual appetite is always craving.

CHAPTER XIV.

1. A prudent woman, by proper management of her domestic concerns, exceedingly promotes the welfare of her family. A woman, that has no fear of God, nor regard to her business, that is wilful, and wasteful, and indulges her ease, will impoverish and waste, and as certainly be the ruin of her house, as if she plucked it down with her hands.

2. Here are, Grace and sin in their true colours. They that despise God's precepts, and will not be ruled by them—his promises, and will not accept of them,—despise God himself, and all his attributes.

3. Where there is pride in the heart, and no wisdom in the head to suppress it, it commonly shows itself in proud boasting, proud censuring, proud scorning, proud commanding; this is the rod, or branch, of pride. It grows from that root of bitterness which is in the heart. The root must be plucked up, or we cannot conquer this branch. The prudent and conciliating words of wise men preserve them from contentions, and get them out of difficulties, as well as benefit others.

4. Those who keep that about them, which is for use and service, not for state and show, are likely to thrive. And there can be no advantage without some incumbrance which, though inconsiderable, will affright the indolent.

4. Where there are no ministers of the gospel, there is no food for the souls. Oxen are emblematical of faithful, laborious ministers. The same word as is here used for oxen signifies teachers. Through the unwearied labours of gospel ministers, the blessing of God attending them, there is much spiritual food. There is an increase of converts, a harvest of souls is brought in, an increase of gifts and of grace, of spiritual light and knowledge.—*Gill*.

5. A witness that is conscientious, will not dare to give a testimony in the least untrue; or to represent things otherwise

than according to the best of his knowledge.

6. A scorner is one who treats Divine things with contempt. He deems his own understanding sufficient for every subject. In this presumptuous frame of mind he may even study the scriptures without success. His heart disposes him to condemn the truths of revelation, and he will endeavour to explain all so as to make out a more palatable system. Or, if he finds he cannot get rid of the truths he hates, he will deny their Divine authority. He affects to be the teacher instead of the scholar of God. But he that is conscious of his ignorance and unworthiness, will search the scriptures in a humble, teachable spirit, and thus knowledge becomes easy to him.

7. See here how we may discover a wicked man; if there is no savour of piety in his discourse, we may conclude the treasure is bad. Sometimes the only way of proving wicked discourse and witness-
ing against it, is by leaving the company.

8. Christian prudence consists in rightly understanding our way; we are travellers, whose concern is, not to spy wonders, but to get toward their journey's end. It is not to be busy in other men's matters, but to look well to ourselves; to understand the directions of our way, that we may observe them; the dangers of our way, that we may avoid them; the difficulties of our way, that we may break through them; and the advantages of our way, that we may improve them: to understand the rules we are to walk by, and the ends we are to walk toward, and walk accordingly. The bad man puts a cheat upon himself, and goes on in his mistake.

9. Foolish and profane men consider sin a mere trifle, rather to be made light of than mourned over. Fools make a mock at the sin-offering, so some; they that make light of sin, make light of Christ. They are fools that make light of sin, for they make light of that which God complains of, Amos 2. 13, which lay heavy upon Christ, and which they themselves will have other thoughts of shortly. Among the righteous there is favour, the favour of God.

10. We are not able to judge of the inward anguish or pleasure of others. We do not know what stings of conscience or corroding passions torment the prosperous sinner. Nor does the world know the

inward satisfaction a serious christian enjoys, even in poverty and sickness.

It is a great comfort to believers that our Redeemer bore our griefs, and knows our sorrows, and is touched with the feeling of them. The broken in spirit may therefore pour forth all their sorrows at the throne of grace, and expect from it all needful succours.—(46.)

11. Sin is the ruin of great families. Righteousness is the rise and stability, even of mean families. They shall flourish, at all events, in graces and comforts, which are true riches and honours.

12. The way of open iniquity must seem wrong to every one that reflects; but the way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly-mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, seem right to those that walk in them. Self-deceivers will prove, in the end, self-destroyers.

13. This shows the vanity of carnal mirth. The conscience tells us there is no reason to be merry, Hos. 9. 1. The heaviness will be so much the greater, when for all these things God shall bring the sinner into judgment.

14. Backsliding begins in the heart; it is the evil heart of unbelief that departs from God; and of all sinners backsliders will have most terror when they reflect on their own ways, Luke 11. 26. A good man shall be satisfied from himself, from what God has wrought in him, Gal. 6. 4.

15. Readiness to believe what others say has ever proved most mischievous. Multitudes have thus been seduced into the most dangerous sins. The whole world was thus ruined at first. There is nothing in which we are more ready to be deceived than in points of religion. A prudent man will therefore search the scriptures, and seek wisdom from God by daily prayer. As Christ is the only way to the Father, the man who is spiritually wise walks in his religious course, depending on the Saviour alone for acceptance. He is sober and vigilant, watchful against the devices of the enemies of his salvation; and while he guards against them by taking heed to God's word, he commits himself to the guidance of him who led Israel through the wilderness, and he arrives safely at the paradise where there is no serpent to betray.—(46.)

16. Holy fear is an excellent guard against every thing that is unholy. He

who cannot bear to be checked, and, fearless of danger, persists in his rebellion, his ruin will quickly be the proof of his folly.

17. An angry man is to be pitied as well as blamed; through the surprise of a temptation he disturbs and disgraces himself; but the revengeful is far more odious.

18. Sin is the shame of sinners. This corruption of nature is derived from our first parents, with all the calamities that attend it. Wisdom is the honour of the wise; they look upon it as their brightest ornament.

19. Sometimes God extorts, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the excellency of God's people, Esth. 7. 7; 2 Kings 3. 12. There is a day coming when the upright shall have the dominion.

20. There is little friendship in the world but what is governed by self-interest, which is no true friendship at all, nor what a wise man will either value himself on, or put any confidence in. It is good having God our Friend, for he will not desert us.

21. The despising a man for his circumstances, appearance, or occupation, is a sin, and the opposite to that merciful conduct which the word of God requires.

22. How miserably mistaken they are, that not only do evil, but devise it. How wisely they consult their own interest, that not only do good, but devise it.

23. All labour of the head, or of the hand, will turn to some good account or other. If men's religion runs all out in talk and noise, and their praying is only the labour of the lips, they will be spiritually poor, and come to nothing.

24. The riches of men of wisdom and piety enhance their reputation, and enlarge their sphere of usefulness, and so make them the more honourable. If men be wicked and corrupt, their wealth will but the more expose them.

25. A man of integrity will venture the displeasure of the greatest, to bring truth to light, and rescue those who are injured by falsehood. A faithful minister, who truly witnesses against sin, is thereby instrumental to deliver souls from eternal death. It is the interest of a nation to punish false witness-bearing and lying.

26, 27. Those who fear the Lord so as to obey and serve him, have a strong ground of confidence, and will be preserved. They are his children, and have a refuge in their Father's love, to which they may always resort. It is an ever-

flowing spring of comfort and joy; a fountain of life, yielding constant satisfaction to the soul; joys that are pure and fresh, and can never be drawn dry; it is a well of living water, the earnest of eternal life. Let us seek to this Fountain of life, that we may escape the snares of death.

28. It is much for the honour of a king to have a populous kingdom; it is a sign that he rules well; it is a sign that he and his kingdom are under the blessing of God. Let all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, do what they can, that many be added to his church.

29. A mild, patient man is to be accounted an intelligent man, one that learns of Christ, who is Wisdom itself. Unbridled passion is folly proclaimed. He that is hasty of spirit, thinks thereby to magnify himself, and make those about stand in awe of him, whereas really he exalts his own folly, he makes it known.

30. An upright, contented, and benevolent mind conduces to health and to prolong life. Envy and malignant passions prey upon the spirits, and ruin the constitution like a malignant disease.

31. To oppress the poor is to reproach the Creator, as though he had formed them of another species. Every one that honours God will treat them with compassion.

32. The wicked man cleaves so close to the world, that he cannot find in his heart to leave it, but his soul is required, is forced from him; he dies in his sins, under the guilt and power of them, unjustified, unsanctified. How comfortable the condition of godly men when finishing their course. Though they have pain, and some dread of death, they have before them the blessed hope, which God, who cannot lie, has promised.

33. Wisdom possesses the heart, and regulates the affections and tempers of him that hath understanding. But a fool continually displays his ignorance and wickedness by his words and actions.

34. Piety and holiness are inseparably connected with industry, sobriety, and honesty, and promote outward blessings. They insure the Divine blessing to the community, which must exalt any nation; while every kind of sin tends to the contrary.

35. In a well-ordered government, favours are dispensed according to merit.

The great King who reigns over heaven and earth will reward faithful servants who honour his gospel by the proper dis-

charge of the duties of their stations; for he despises not the lowest services of the meanest.—(46.)

CHAPTER XV.

1. Reason will be better spoken, and a right cause better pleaded, with meekness than with passion; hard arguments do best with soft words. Nothing stirs up anger and sows discord like grievous words.

2. He that has knowledge, is to use it aright, for the edification of others; and it is the tongue that must make use of it in profitable discourse.

3. The eye of God is always upon the children of men. It denotes not only his omniscience, that he sees all, but his universal providence, that he upholds and governs all. Secret sins, services, and sorrows are under his eye. This speaks comfort to saints, terror to sinners.

4. A good tongue is healing; healing to wounded consciences, by comforting them; to sin-sick souls, by convincing them, accommodating differences, and reconciling parties at variance. Proud, passionate language makes breaches upon a man's spirit; many a heart has been broken thereby.

5. If instruction be despised, give reproof, rather than suffer men to go on undisturbed in the way to ruin. To submit to instruction and reproof, to value them as favours, to make use of them, is an evidence that men are wise.

6. A contented mind and confidence in God are an inestimable treasure in the house of the righteous. The larger revenues of worldly men increase their fears and suspicions, add strength to their passions, bring guilt upon the conscience, and render the fear of death more distressing.

7. We use knowledge aright when we disperse it; not only are communicative, but diffusive of this good, with humility and prudence. The heart of the foolish has nothing to disperse that is good.

8, 9. The most costly sacrifices of the wicked must be abomination to the Lord, because of their corrupt motives. They put other things in the stead of Christ's atonement, or in the place of holy obedience. But none that desire to repent and seek the salvation of God will be rejected. Praying graces are his own gift, and the work of his own Spirit, with which he is well pleased.

10. Those who cannot bear to be cor-

rected, must expect to be destroyed. Of all sinners, reproofs are worst resented by apostates. But he that hates reproof shall perish for ever in his sins, since he would not be parted from them.

11. There is nothing so deep or secret that it can be hid from the eyes of God, much less man's thoughts.—(58.)

Even the abodes of departed souls are open to God's inspection and cognizance; how much more then does his eye search the secret recesses of the soul!—(36.)

The deepest machinations of the prince of hell are open to the Lord, and must end in disappointment. Then how can man hide his counsels from God?

12. A scorner cannot endure to commune seriously with his own heart. We ought not only to bid the wise welcome when they come to us, but to go to them.

13. A peaceful conscience, a joyful hope, and a contented mind, give the possessor constant cheerfulness, which tends much to his enjoyment of life, whatever his outward circumstances may be. But a gloomy, impatient, unthankful spirit, springing from pride and undue attachment to worldly objects, which God withholds or withdraws, renders a man uneasy to himself and others.

14. A wise man is not satisfied with his wisdom, but seeks the increase of it, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. While a good man hungers after the solid satisfactions of grace, a carnal mind feasts on the gratifications of appetite and fancy; it rests contented, flattering itself.

15. Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit; all their days are evil days. Such are to be pitied, prayed for, succoured, and comforted. It might have been our own lot, or may be yet. Others enjoy prosperity, and are of a cheerful spirit; they serve God with gladness of heart, and it prompts their obedience. But let such rejoice with trembling.

16, 17. Believers abound when worldly eyes see little; their wants are supplied; the Lord is with them for their portion, without having the cares, troubles, and temptations which accompany the revenues of the wicked. Brotherly love and harmony spring from their love to God, and their sense of his love to them; this renders a dinner of herbs better than a luxurious feast.

How blessed were the disciples of our Lord when they sat at meat with him.

Barley loaves and a few small fishes were probably their ordinary fare; but they enjoyed his Divine discourse. Such pleasure as they enjoyed we cannot now expect; but love is his great commandment. And if love is so necessary to sweeten our ordinary meals, we must never come to the Lord's table without exercising supreme love to Christ, and fervent love to our fellow christians. We must consider ourselves one body, when all partaking of one bread.—(46.)

18. A wrathful man gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though ever so trifling. He that is slow to anger, not only prevents strife, but appeases it, if kindled.

19. Those that have no heart to their work, pretend their way is hedged up with thorns, that they cannot do their work without a great deal of hardship and danger. Thus many are all their lives uneasy, because slothful; they live always in doubt about their state, because in continual neglect of some duty. But an honest desire and endeavour to do our duty, will, by the grace of God, make it easy, and we shall find it strewn with roses, easy to be trodden, and not intricate.

20. Good children are the joy of their parents. It adds much to their satisfaction, if they have reason to think that they have been a comfort to their parents in their declining years. Those who treat an aged mother or a father with contempt or neglect, evince their own folly.

21. Those who are void of grace, sense, and consideration, take pleasure in doing the most absurd and wicked things; but such as are truly wise study that their thoughts, words, and actions should be regular, sincere, and holy.—(10.)

22. If men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves, or are so confident of their own judgment, that they scorn to consult others, they are not likely to bring any thing considerable to pass.

23. Wisdom is required to suit our discourse to the occasions. A man may take pleasure, but may by no means take pride in having spoken acceptably and well.

24. The way of wisdom and holiness is here recommended to us. A good man sets his affections on things above, his way leads directly thither. It is the way to escape that misery which we cannot but see ourselves in danger of.

25. Pride is the ruin of multitudes.

Those that are dejected God delights to support, and often does it remarkably.

26. The thoughts of wicked men God hates; they are an offence to him, who knows the heart, and all that passes there. Thoughts and words are pleasant, when they come from a pure, a purified heart.

27. The covetous man will let none of his family have rest or enjoyment. Greediness of gain often tempts men to projects that bring ruin. Those that are generous as well as righteous, entail a blessing upon their families.

28. A good man is proved to be a wise man by this; he governs his tongue well, Jam. 3. 2. Doubtless that is an evil heart, which overflows with evil.

29. God sets himself at a distance from those that set him at defiance. He will draw nigh to those in a way of mercy, who draw nigh to him in a way of duty. It is the prayer of a righteous man, that avails much, Jam. 5. 16. He is a present help in all they call upon him for.

30. The works of creation and the various objects we behold give great pleasure to the mind, and good tidings cheer the heart. But how delightful is it to the humbled soul to hear the good report of gospel salvation, to behold the glory of God as revealed in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ.

31. Faithful, friendly reproofs are means of spiritual life, and lead to eternal life. Those that are so wise as to bear reproof well, will thereby be made wiser.

32. The main error of sinners is, undervaluing their own souls; therefore they prefer the body before the soul, and wrong the soul to please the body. He that amends the faults he is reproved for, shows the value he has for his own soul.

33. Let us remember that the fear of the Lord is the principal instruction of wisdom, and that before durable honour is humility. For the Lord causes every man to feel his own vileness and poverty, before he confers on him wisdom and righteousness, honour and immortality.

The fear of the Lord will dispose us to search the scriptures with due reverence; it will influence us to make a thankful use of Christ as he is made of God wisdom unto us, and to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit. While we humbly renounce our own righteousness, and place all our dependence on the grace of God, we are exalted in the righteousness of Christ.—(46.)

CHAPTER XVI.

1. The preventing and renewing grace of God alone prepares the heart for every good work; and the wisdom which he gives, dictates every prudent and pious answer and observation we can make. This teaches us a great truth, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think or speak any thing, as of ourselves, that is wise and good; but that all our sufficiency is of God, who is with the heart and with the mouth, and works in us both to will and to do, Phil. 2. 13; Ps. 10. 17.

2. Our ignorance, pride, and self-flattery render us very partial judges respecting our own characters and conduct. God sees men's ways, and tries their spirits.

3. Roll thy works upon the Lord, roll the burden of thy care upon God, and then leave it with him, by faith and dependence upon him, with submission and resignation to him.

4. Though some of God's creatures have rebelled against him, he will not be deprived of his glory from them. He is not the author of their wickedness, though, contrary to their intentions, he uses their agency to accomplish many parts of his plan. He makes use of the wicked to execute righteous vengeance on each other, and will be glorified by their final destruction.

5. The pride and power of sinners cannot secure them against God; though they strengthen themselves, though they strengthen one another, they shall not escape his righteous judgment; woe unto him that strives with his Maker.

6. By the mercy and truth of God in Christ Jesus, the sins of believers are taken away. They rely on his faithful promises of forgiveness and grace, and are pardoned and sanctified; by the fear of God in their hearts they are influenced to depart from evil and to do good. The power of sin is broken in us, by mercy and truth commanding in us.

7. He that has all hearts in his hand, has access to and power over men's spirits, and can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him. Let us then make it our care to be reconciled to God, and to keep ourselves in his love.

8. A small estate, honestly come by, which a man is content with, and puts to a right use, is much better, and more valuable, than a great estate ill-got. It carries with it more inward satisfaction, it will last longer, and turn to a better account,

9. If men devise their way, so as to make God's glory their end, and his will their rule, he will direct their steps by his Spirit and grace. But let men devise their worldly affairs ever so politicly, and with ever so great a probability of success, yet God orders the event, and sometimes directs their steps to what they least intended. Let us pray in every step we take, Lord, direct my way, 1 Thess. 3. 11.

10. This may be read as a precept to the kings and judges of the earth, to be wise and instructed; let them be just, and rule in the fear of God.

11. The administration of public justice by the magistrate is an ordinance of God; it ought to be held, by a steady and impartial hand; and we ought to submit to it, for the Lord's sake, Rom. 13. 1; 1 Pet.

2. 13. The observation of justice in commerce between man and man is likewise a Divine appointment. As the Lord weighs every man's actions in an impartial balance, the believer carefully examines himself by the rule of God's word.

12. Here is the character of a good king; he not only abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors to do any himself. He that makes conscience of using his power aright, shall find that to be the best security of his government; it will obtain the blessing of God.

13. A good king will put those in power, who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous, who know how to speak right, and to the purpose.

14, 15. The power of kings is every where great, but especially so in eastern countries, where their will was and is a law. But we are concerned to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour, of the King of kings. His frowns are worse than death, and his favour better than life, it is a cloud of the latter rain, very refreshing; they are fools, who, to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour of an earthly prince, throw themselves out of God's favour.

16. Grace will stand us in stead in a dying hour, when gold will do us no good. Many take pains to get wealth, and yet come short of it; but grace was never denied to any that sincerely sought it. There is vanity and vexation of spirit in getting wealth, but joy and satisfaction of spirit in getting wisdom.

17. To live in any known sin is utterly inconsistent with wisdom and uprightness. A sincerely religious man will not allow himself in any sin, however profit-

able or pleasant, or however dangerous the course of holiness. He keeps at a distance from every appearance of evil, and daily prays that he may be led and kept in the way of uprightness by the Holy Spirit. Happy is the man that keepeth this way. His soul is preserved from the paths of the destroyer. He walks in Christ and is led by the Spirit of Christ; he shall come at length to the Zion of everlasting bliss.—(46.)

18. Proud men are often most proud and insolent, just before their destruction. When men set God's judgments at defiance, and think themselves at the greatest distance from them, it is a sign that they are at the door. Therefore let us not fear the pride of others, but fear it in ourselves.

19. Humility, though it expose to contempt in the world, prepares us for glory, secures from many temptations, and preserves the quiet of our own souls; it is much better than that high-spiritedness, which, though it carry away the honour and wealth of the world, makes God an enemy.

20. Those who understand business, and manage it prudently, bid fair to succeed, but true happiness can only be obtained by trusting in God.—(10.)

Or, he that understandeth God's word shall find good; he who diligently endeavours to know and to obey it, shall experience its salutary effects.—(36.)

21. The man whose wisdom resides in his heart and regulates his affections, will be found more truly prudent than many who possess shining talents; and if he have the gift of conversing in a persuasive manner, he will have a vast advantage in diffusing the truth.

22. As waters in a thirsty land, so is a wise man to his friends and neighbours. He hath in him a well of living waters, and they issue forth in quickening and refreshing discourses. Fools discover their folly when most earnestly endeavouring to appear wise.—(46.)

23. The wise man's self-knowledge, and experience of the manifold windings and workings of his heart, always suggest something proper to be spoken to others.

24. The bones are the strength of the body; and the good word of God is a means of spiritual strength, curing the diseases that weaken our souls.

25. This is repeated by way of caution to us all to take heed of deceiving ourselves in the great concerns of our souls,

and by way of terror to those whose way is not right, however it may seem to themselves or others.

26. This is designed to engage us to diligence, both in our worldly business, and in the work of religion. We must either labour for the meat which endureth to everlasting life, or we must perish. If our souls hunger and thirst for spiritual provisions, we shall diligently use the means of obtaining them.

27, 28. Ungodly men frequently bestow more pains to do mischief than would be needful to do good. They make diligent search to find out some subject of discord or calumny; they kindle the flames of contention in some, and of lust in others. The whisperer by his reports and misconstructions separates friends; what a hateful, but how common a character!

29, 30. Here is another sort of evil men described. Such as do all the mischief they can by force and violence. They aim to ruin some in this world by bringing them into trouble, and some in the other world by bringing them into sin.

31. It ought to be the great care of old people to be found in the way of religion and serious godliness. Old age is honourable, and commands respect; but if it be found in the way of wickedness, its honour is forfeited. Grace is the glory of old age.

32. This recommends meekness or being slow to anger, not apt to resent provocation; so slow in our motions towards anger, that we may be quickly stopped and pacified. The conquest of ourselves, and our own unruly passions, requires more steady, constant, and regular management, than obtaining victory over an enemy.

33. The Divine Providence orders and directs those things which to us seem casual. Nothing comes to pass by chance, nor is any event determined by fortune, but every thing by the will and counsel of God. All the disposals of Providence concerning our affairs, we must look upon to be the directing of our lot, the determining of what we referred to God, and must be reconciled to them accordingly.

Let us not think that our mountain is immovable, for God can make the veriest trifle the instrument of destroying all the strength of our confidence. Let us trust in Him at all times, and trouble not ourselves with anxious thoughts about the future parts of our lives. The things that are to come to pass depend upon a

complicated chain of causes out of our reach, but every one of them is in the hand of God. Blessed are those that give themselves up to the will of God with cheerful resignation. Nothing shall befall them but according to the will of Him who gave himself for them, who loves them better than they do themselves, and knows infinitely better what is good for them.—(46.)

CHAPTER XVII.

1. These words recommend family love and peace, as needful for the comfort of human life. Those that live in unity and quietness live very comfortably, though they are low in the world; though they have but each of them a morsel, and that a dry morsel. Those who live in contention, though they have plenty of dainties, live uncomfortably; they cannot expect the blessing of God, nor can have peace in their own consciences.

1. The greater part of the peace-offerings were eaten by the person that offered the sacrifice and his friends, Lev. 7. 15; 1 Sam. 9. 13.

2. Sometimes the servant is wise, and a blessing and credit to the family, when the son is a burden and shame to the family. The wise servant will be more deserving and more likely to appear one of the family than a profligate son.

3. God tries the heart by affliction, Ps. 66. 10, 11. He thus hath detected many, hath often shown the sin remaining in the heart of the believer, and hath given evidence of the power of grace in his people.

4. Flatterers, evil speakers, and liars, and especially false teachers, are welcome to those that live in iniquity or hypocrisy.

5. Not only those that oppress the poor, but they that mock them and deride their poverty, reproach God; they treat his providence and his precepts with contempt. Every one that rejoices at others' calamities will be condemned.

6. It is an honour to parents, when they are old, to have children, and children's children, growing up, that are likely to maintain and advance the reputation of their families. It is an honour to children to have wise and godly parents, and to have them continued to them, even after they are themselves grown up and settled in the world.

7. A fool, in Solomon's proverbs, signifies a wicked man, whom excellent speech does not become, because his con-

versation gives the lie to it. How very unbecoming is it for an honourable man, to take advantage from his character and the confidence put in him, to lie and dissemble.

8. Those who set their hearts upon money, will do any thing for it. It has a great influence, and they will be sure to go the way that it leads, though contrary to justice, and not consistent.

What influence should the gifts of God have on our hearts! They are more numerous than the hairs upon our heads, and more precious than pearls and diamonds. Surely they must have a constraining influence upon every heart that is not harder than the nether millstone.—(46.)

9. The way to preserve peace is to make the best of every thing; not to tell others what has been said or done against them, when it is not necessary; nor to take notice of what has been said or done against ourselves, but to excuse both, and put the best construction upon them. In the repetition things themselves are aggravated, and the passions about them revived.

To cover our own transgressions, like Adam, would be very dangerous, but we have the noblest example, even that of the Redeemer, for the covering of other men's faults. He excused even his murderers when he prayed to his Father for their forgiveness, Luke 23. 34.—(46.)

10. A gentle reproof will enter not only into the head, but into the heart of a wise man, so as to have a strong influence upon him. He that is wilful, is very rarely benefited even by severity.

11. Here is the sin and punishment of an evil man. Angels, God's messengers, shall be ministers of his justice against him, Ps. 78. 49. Satan shall be let loose upon him, and the messengers of Satan.

12. It is dangerous to meet a profligate man, urged off by headstrong passions, or provoked by meeting resistance. Let us watch over our own passions, and avoid the company of furious men.

13. To render evil for evil is brutish, but to render evil for good is devilish. He that does so entails a curse upon his family. The Jews stoned Christ for his good works, John 8. 59, therefore is his blood upon them and upon their children.

14. What danger there is in the beginning of strife! One hot word, one peevish reflection, one angry demand, one spiteful contradiction, begets another, and so on, till it proves like a hole through

which the water has got a little passage; it widens the breach more and more, and there is then no stopping it. Take heed of the first spark of contention, and put it out as soon as ever it appears. Resist its earliest display; leave it off, if it were possible, before you begin.

15. This shows what an offence it is to God, either to acquit the guilty, or condemn those that are not guilty, or to contribute to either.

16. The advantages afforded us in Providence are a price put into our hands wherewith to acquire wisdom. Such are a pious education, good counsels, the preached gospel, and, above all, the written word, of God. Man's neglect of God's favour and his own interest is very absurd.

17. That is not true friendship which is not constant; it will be so if it be sincere, and actuated by a good principle. No change of outward circumstances should abate our affection for our friends or relatives. We should be constant and persevering in efforts for each other's good.

But no friend except Christ deserves unlimited confidence. In him this text received, and still receives its most glorious accomplishment. He remembered us in our low estate, and forgets us not in his own exaltation. In afflictions his kindness is most richly experienced, and our provocations do not alienate his loving kindness from us. This is our Beloved, and our Friend. In him we will trust, to him we will devote our hearts.—(46.)

Whenever the deeply distressed sinner applies for salvation to the once crucified but now glorified Redeemer, he will find him a constant and condescending Friend and Brother; for whom he loveth, he loveth to the end.

18. Solomon commended friendship in adversity, ver. 17; yet let not any be unjust to their families, and wrong them: one part of our duty must be made to consist with another. We may well be upon our guard against those who would draw us into unreasonable engagements for them, when they are present to answer for themselves. Yet Christ becoming Surety for men, when he knew how dear the engagement would cost him, was a most glorious display of Divine wisdom; for he was competent to discharge the bond, and would appear more rich in

glory by impoverishing himself that we might be enriched.

18. It was the custom for a person who became security for another to join or strike hands with the debtor, to intimate that he was become one with him.

19. A man who is fond of contention acts as if in love with sin. If we would keep a clear conscience and a quiet mind, we must shun all occasions and excitements to anger. A man who affects magnificence in his buildings, and a style of living above his rank and income, goes the way to ruin.

19. The entrances to houses in the east are often made so low as not to be entered without stooping; this is adopted as a security against robbers, especially the predatory Arabs, who, when making an attack, are unwilling to dismount, and frequently ride into such buildings as have entrances sufficiently lofty.

20. Framing ill designs will be of no advantage to us; there is nothing got by them. Giving ill language will be a great disadvantage to us. Many have paid dear for an unbridled tongue.

21. This speaks that very emphatically, which many wise and good men feel very sensibly, what a grievous, vexatious thing it is to have a foolish, wicked child. How uncertain all our creature-comforts are, so that those often prove the greatest crosses, in whom we promised ourselves most satisfaction! But we are unwise in suffering one affliction to drown the sense of a thousand mercies: there are joys sufficient to balance even this sorrow.

22. It is healthful to be cheerful. Solomon means a heart rejoicing in God, serving him with gladness, and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments. It is a great mercy that God gives us *leave* to be cheerful, and *cause* to be cheerful, if by his grace he gives us *hearts* to be cheerful. We should watch and pray against all melancholy indispositions, for they lead us into trouble as well as into temptation.

23. See here what an evil thing bribery is; the wicked man is ashamed of it; it is industriously concealed. He is a bad man that gives bribes, as well as he that takes them. The wicked are ready to part with their money, though beloved and lodged near their hearts, to purchase impunity for their crimes.

23. Asiatics carry their purses in their bosoms above their girdles.

24. The prudent man keeps the word of God continually in view as the measure and rule of his conduct. But the

foolish man regards every thing more than his own duty and safety; his thoughts are roving about lying vanities, any where but where they should be; he cannot fix his thoughts to one subject, nor pursue any purpose with steadiness.

25. Wicked children are an affliction to both their parents. They are an occasion of anger to the father, so the word signifies, because they contemn his authority; of sorrow to the mother, because they abuse her tenderness.

26. It is criminal for those in authority to oppress. It is very wrong for subjects to find fault with rulers for doing their duty. The observation also applies to other stations and connexions in life.

27, 28. Two ways a man may show himself to be a wise man. 1. By the good temper of his mind. A man of understanding is of a precious spirit, so the word is; one that looks well to his spirit, keeps it easy to himself, and pleasant to others. A gracious spirit is a precious spirit, and renders a man amiable, and more excellent than his neighbour. He is of a quiet spirit, so some read it, not heated with passion, but even and stayed. 2. By the good government of his tongue. He that has knowledge, and aims to do good with it, is careful, when he does speak, to speak to the purpose. This is generally taken for such a sure indication of wisdom, that an ignorant man may gain the reputation of being wise, if he hold his tongue, hear, and see, and say little. But though a fool hold his peace, God knows his heart, and the folly that is bound there; thoughts are words to him, and therefore he cannot be deceived in his judgment of men.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1. The most important difference among men in respect of wisdom, originates from the disposition of their hearts. If we would get knowledge and grace, we must desire it, as that which we need, 1 Cor. 12.31. We must separate ourselves from all things which would divert us from, or retard us in the pursuit of it; and then be willing to take pains, and try all the methods of improving ourselves.

1. The Greek version is, "He who desireth to part with friends seeketh excuses; but he will always be liable to reproach."

2. Those that take no pleasure in learning or religion, will make nothing to pur-

pose of either. No progress is made in them, if they are a task and a drudgery, or if the only design is to have something to make a show with.

3. When the wicked find admission into places of trust, or religious societies or company, they soon betray their contempt of that which is good, and expose themselves to reproach. God has said that those who despise him, shall be lightly esteemed. As soon as ever sin entered, shame followed it, and sinners make themselves despicable.

4. The well-spring of wisdom in the heart of an experienced believer continually supplies him with seasonable observations. These flow from him spontaneously, in a pure, gentle, and refreshing manner.

5. The merits of the cause must be regarded, not the person. A man's wealth or liberality too often make way for him among professed christians, who would not judge favourably of him if he were poor.

6, 7. Solomon has often showed what mischief bad men do to others with their ungoverned tongues; here he shows what mischief they do to themselves, even bringing destruction upon their souls.

8. Tale-bearers are those who secretly carry stories from house to house, which perhaps have some truth in them, but are not fit to be told, or are misrepresented, and are all told with design to blast men's reputation, to break friendships, or to make mischief. How base are they that sow contention! what fatal effects may be expected from small beginnings of jealousy!

9. Those are justly branded as fools among men, and before God, who waste the talents they are intrusted with. Idleness is no better. He that is remiss in his work is as much a fool, and in as sure and ready a way to poverty. The observation is true in religion; he that is trifling and careless in praying and hearing, is brother to him that does not pray or hear at all. Omissions of duty and in duty are fatal to the soul, as well as commissions of sin. Let us then value and diligently seek the salvation of Christ.

10, 11. The Divine perfections as revealed in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, form a strong tower for the security of the believer, who relies on the mercy, truth, power, and love of God. He first sought and found admission into this refuge when he was alarmed with the dread of deserved wrath and condemnation,

and hastens into it by faith and prayer, when burdened by guilt, alarmed by the power of his sins, or the force of temptations or troubles. This refuge is ever near and secure; here the righteous are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. His covenant and all the promises of it make a strong tower for all God's people. How false and deceitful the defence of the rich man that has his portion and treasure in the things of this world, and expects as much from them as a godly man from his God! See how he deceives himself: it is a strong city, and a high wall, but it is so only in his own conceit; like the house built on the sand, it will fail the builder when he most needs it. Trouble will find entrance into it; death will storm and take the city; judgment will sweep it and them together into final perdition. They will be exposed to the just wrath of that Judge whom they despised when preached to them as a Saviour.

12. Before destruction men are commonly so infatuated, that they are more haughty than ever. Or if that do not always hold, yet, after the heart has been lifted up with pride, a fall comes. Honour shall be the reward of humility.

13. Eagerness, with self-conceit, and affectation of appearing clever, often leads men to interrupt others, and even to answer them before they have finished their discourse. This is particularly the case with hasty controversialists; but it will expose a man to deserved shame.

14. Even natural resolution will support under manifold pains and calamities; and the inward consolations of the Holy Spirit will enable a believer to bear afflictions or persecutions. But when the conscience is tortured with remorse, when the heart is racked with evil passions, when he that made the soul causes his judgments to approach, or permits Satan to pour in his temptations, no human fortitude can sustain the misery. Even the incarnate Son of God, in such circumstances, exclaimed, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. The unbeliever, in such a case, must sink into despair—what then will hell be?

15. Those that seek knowledge shall get it, for God never said, Seek in vain. If the ear seeks it, the heart gets it, and keeps it, and is enriched by it. We must get knowledge, not only into our heads,

but into our hearts, and experience the power and influence of it.

16. Here is shown the power of gifts, presents made even by inferiors to those above them, and who have more than they.

Blessed be the Lord, who makes us welcome to come to his throne without money and without price, to receive the richest gifts. May his gifts make room for him in our souls!—(46.)

16. Among eastern nations it always has been customary to bring presents when any one appears before a superior, and even when interchanging visits. These presents are often very small; but the higher the rank of the persons to whom they are presented, the more considerable they ought to be.

17. Self-love induces men to make the best of their own conduct. Even without design, if we are not very watchful, we shall mistake some circumstances in our own favour. It is well for us to listen to our enemies, that we may form a better judgment of ourselves.

18. When causes and differences could not be satisfactorily decided, it was customary sometimes to refer the matter to God, by casting lots, with solemn prayer. The profanation of the lot, by using it in matters of diversion or avarice, forms an objection to this now, and few mighty ones would abide by such a determination.

19. Great care must be taken to prevent quarrels among relations, and those that are under special obligations to each other. Wisdom and grace make it easy to forgive; but corruption makes it most difficult. Let us therefore take heed of disobliging a brother. Esau was a brother offended, and seemed harder to be won than a strong city; yet, by the work of God upon his heart, in answer to Jacob's prayer, he was won. The same observations hold true in other controversies.

19. The Greek and Latin versions have, "A brother assisted by a brother is like a fortified and lofty city, and is strong as a well founded palace." A part of the English version is in italics, being supplied by the translators.

20. The belly is here put for the heart and conscience, as elsewhere. It is of great consequence to us whether that be satisfied, and what that is filled with, for, accordingly, will our satisfaction be, and our inward peace. We ought to take as great care about the words we speak, as about the fruit of our trees. Those who love to speak good things shall eat good fruit from thence; they that love lies and iniquity shall gather fruit accordingly.

21. Many a one has caused his death, or the death of others, by a false or injurious tongue; and many a one has saved his own life, or procured the comfort of it, by a prudent, gentle tongue; and has saved the lives of others by a seasonable testimony or intercession for them.

22. A good wife is a great blessing to a man. He that finds a help meet for him, that sought such a one with care and prayer, and has found what he sought, has found a jewel of great value, which will not only contribute more than any thing to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven. God is to be acknowledged in it with thankfulness; it is a token of his favour.

23. Poverty, though attended by many inconveniences to the body, has often a good effect upon the spirit; it mortifies pride, it tells men they must not prescribe or demand. At the throne of God's grace we are all poor, and must use entreaties; not answer, but make application. A prosperous condition often makes men proud, haughty, and imperious. The Lord, who is rich in mercy, will not answer the humble supplicant roughly.

24. Christ Jesus is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He never will forsake those who trust in and love him. Blessed be his name for the christian friends he hath given us, whose constant and faithful love to us for his sake is our chief comfort, next to communion with him, in this unkind world, where brethren often are unkind. May we be such friends to others for our Master's sake, and from gratitude to him.

Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. Neither death nor sin itself can separate us from his love. What shall we render to him for his marvellous loving-kindness? Love and obedience: we are his friends if we do whatsoever he commands us, John 15. 14.—(46.)

CHAPTER XIX.

1. A poor man that fears God and conducts himself with integrity, is more honourable, valuable, and happy, than a man destitute of wisdom and grace, however rich or advanced in rank. The Son of God hath shown poverty to have nothing in it dishonourable, by choosing it for his own condition.

1. This verse is found again, ch. 28. 6, with

the addition of, "though he be rich," which appears to be wanted here.

2. What good can the soul do, or what is it good for, if it be without knowledge? He that will not take time to ponder the path of his feet, sins; he cannot but take many false steps.

3. Men run into difficulties and troubles by their own folly and wickedness, and then fret at the appointments of God. Numbers, instead of being humbled for wilful sins, and seeking salvation, make excuses for their crimes and impenitence.

4. Here we may see how strong is men's love of money, that they will love any man, how undeserving soever, if he has plenty of money, and is free with it. Wealth gains many friends; but how weak is men's love of one another! He who, while he prospered, was loved and respected, if he fall into poverty, is not regarded.

5. Those that will tell lies in discourse, are in a fair way to be guilty of the greater wickedness of false-witness bearing. Hope of impunity imboldens them in the sin; but it shall not escape the righteous judgment of God. We know where all liars will have their everlasting portion.

6. Those that are rich and great, are courted and caressed. How earnest then should we be for the favour of God, which is far beyond that of any earthly prince!

How inexcusable we are if we do not love God with all our hearts! His gifts to us are past number, and all the gifts of men to us are fruits of his bounty.—(46.)

7. Those that are poor and low, are slighted and despised.

This sin is almost universal, though nature, as well as scripture, testifies against it. Christ was left in his distress by all his disciples; but he was not alone, for the Father was with him. It is an encouragement to our faith that he had in the days of his flesh so large an experience of the sorrows of poverty.—(46.)

8. Those only love, their souls aright that get true wisdom. He that retains the good lessons he has learnt, and orders his conversation according to them, shall find the benefit of it in his own soul, and shall be happy here and for ever.

9. Here is a repetition of ver. 5, with an addition, He shall perish. Lying is a damning, destroying sin.

10. A man that has not wisdom and grace, has no right or title to true joy, and therefore it is unseemly. It ill becomes those that do not delight in God,

to delight in any thing else. It is very unseemly for a servant to sin, to rule over and oppress those that are God's freemen, and made kings and priests to him.

11. A wise man will observe these rules about his anger—not to be hasty, nor to be warm in his resentments. He attains the most true glory who persists the most steadily in his endeavours to overcome evil with good.

12. The purport of this is to make kings wise and considerate in dispensing their frowns and smiles, and to make subjects faithful and dutiful to their princes. Christ is a King, whose wrath against his enemies will be as the roaring of a lion, Rev. 10. 3, and his favour to his own people as the refreshing dew, Ps. 72. 6.

13. It shows the vanity of the world, that we are liable to the greatest griefs in those things wherein we promise ourselves the greatest comfort.

14. A discreet and virtuous wife is a choice gift of God's providence to a man. She is a more valuable gift than house and riches, contributes more to the comfort and credit of a man's life, and the welfare of his family.

15. A sluggish, slothful disposition impoverishes men, and brings them to want. One that is idle in the affairs of his soul, that takes no care or pains to work out his salvation, shall perish for want of that which is necessary to the soul.

16. If we keep God's word, God's word will keep us from every thing really hurtful. With respect to those that are careless about the end of their ways, that never consider what they have done, or what they are concerned to do, what can come of this but the greatest mischief?

We abuse the doctrine of free grace if we imagine that it supersedes the necessity and advantage of obedience. Although the glory of salvation belongs entirely to Jesus, and the strength of christians stands in him, yet when he communicates the influences of his grace, he makes them influential under his agency in their own preservation from the snares of the destroyer. The saint must not only endeavour to understand the rule of the law, but likewise to observe his own way, that he may direct his steps agreeably to it. Those that live at random must die. This truth is clearly taught in language sufficient to alarm the stoutest sinner. If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, Rom. 8. 13.—(46.)

17. Whatever kindness any man shows to the poor, from compassion to them and believing obedience, God will take care shall be repaid one way or another, to him or to his posterity. God hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom.

18. Parents are here cautioned against foolish indulgence of their children, that discover an ill temper of mind, not likely to be cured by kindness. Check it before it is hardened into a habit; especially if it be in itself sinful, as lying, stealing, or the like; in such a case, put on resolution. When we repress foolish tenderness, we do our best to render our children a comfort to us, and happy in themselves.

19. The spared and spoiled child is likely to become a man of great wrath, impatient of control, who must at length suffer punishment.

20. Those that would be wise in their latter end, must hear counsel, and receive instruction in their beginnings, must be willing to be taught and ruled, willing to be advised and reproved, when young.

21. What comfort does this speak to all God's people, that all his purposes, which, we are sure, are right and good, shall be accomplished in due time! What should we desire, but that all our purposes may agree with God's holy will?

22. It is far better to have a heart to do good, and want ability for it, than to have ability for it, and want a heart to it. A poor man, who wishes you well, but can promise you nothing, because he has nothing, is better than a man who makes you believe he will do mighty things, but, when it comes to the point, will do nothing.

22. A desirable thing in man is his kindness.
—Holden.

23. See what they get that live in the fear of God. 1. Safety. Nothing shall separate them from the love of God, or hurt the soul. 2. Satisfaction. They shall have those comforts which are satisfying; whereas all the satisfactions of sense are soon gone. 3. True and complete happiness. Serious godliness has a direct tendency to eternal life.

24. Habits of indolence, when indulged, so grow upon people, that they have no heart to do the most common and needful things for themselves.

24. The word translated, *bosom*, would be more correctly rendered, *dish*. The slothful man, after putting his hand into the dish, is too indolent to lift it to his mouth. The eastern people, in eat-

ing, use only their fingers and hands, putting them into the dishes, even to soup or pottage.

25. There are occasions when it is right to rebuke a scornful despiser of Divine things with marked severity, as an example to others; but a gentle rebuke will go further with a man of understanding.

26. The young man that wastes his father's substance by extravagance, or makes his aged mother destitute, that he may have the more to spend on his vices, or drives her from his home by his conduct, is hateful, and will come to disgrace.

27. Take heed of hearkening to those who, under pretence of instructing, draw from good. There is that which seems designed for the instruction, but really tends to the destruction of young men. It is the wisdom of young men to dread hearing such talk as tends to instil loose principles into the mind.

28. Here is a description of the worst of sinners, whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil. They are greedy, and glad of an opportunity to sin.

29. Those that ridicule things sacred and serious, make themselves ridiculous; their folly shall be manifest unto all. Those that scorn judgments cannot escape them. The unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings of no effect.

Because sinners feel not the strokes of judgment, they foolishly think they shall for ever escape. But did the old world of the ungodly escape, though spared a hundred and twenty years? Christ himself, when bearing iniquity not his own, was not spared. Justice and judgment took hold of our blessed Surety; and if God spared not his own Son, will he spare stubborn transgressors?—(46.)

CHAPTER XX.

1. Strong drink makes fools of men; and, if it were not notorious, it would scarcely be believed, that man of the greatest abilities, as well as the ignorant, should be capable of foregoing all their advantages, and rendering themselves fools and madmen, merely for the flavour or brief exhilaration produced by strong liquors.

2. How formidable kings are, and how unwise they that provoke them to anger! Much more foolish are they that provoke the King of kings to anger.

3. To engage in quarrels is the greatest folly that can be. It is the honour of a man, a wise man, a man of true spirit, to

cease from strife, yielding and receding from just demands, for peace-sake.

4. Slothfulness, and the love of ease, keep men from the most necessary business, when the proper season is. Thus careless are many in the affairs of their souls; a trifling difficulty will frighten them from the most important duty. Slothfulness deprives them of the most necessary supports. They that would not provide oil in their vessels, begged when the Bridegroom came, and were denied. He who labours and endures hardship in his seed time for eternity, will be properly diligent as to his earthly business.

5. Though many endeavour to conceal their intentions, yet men of sagacity often discover them. Though many capable of giving wise counsel are reserved, yet something may be drawn from them which will recompense those who effect it.

6. Most men will talk of charity, generosity, and piety, but it is hard to find those that have done, and will do more than they speak, or care to hear spoken of.

7. A good man is not liable to those uneasinesses, either in contriving what he shall do, or reflecting on what he has done, which they are liable to that walk in deceit. His family fare better for his sake.

8. If great men are good men, and use their power as they may and ought, what good they may do, and what evil they may prevent!

9. One, or more sins, have dominion in the heart of almost every man, whatever may be the outward behaviour. Alas! who can say, I am sinless? Men may form systems opposed to scripture, or delude themselves in these matters, but here, in this imperfect state, no person whatsoever can pretend to be without sin. We cannot say, We have made our hearts clean; though some can say, Through grace, we are cleaner than we have been; it was the work of the Holy Spirit.

10. See here the various arts of deceiving that men have; all which evils the love of money is the root of. Under these is included all manner of fraud and deceit in commerce and trade. They are all alike an abomination to the Lord; he will not prosper the trade that is thus driven, nor bless what is thus got.

11. Even a young tree is known by its first fruits. Children discover themselves. One may soon see what their temper is, and which way their inclination leads them. Parents should observe their chil-

dren, that they may both manage them, and dispose of them, accordingly.

11. Or, "Even a child will dissemble in his doings, that in truth his work is pure, and in truth it is right."—Holden. See Parkhurst.

12. All the powers and faculties of nature are derived from God, depend upon him, and are to be employed for him. Hearing and seeing are senses that gain knowledge, and we must particularly own God's goodness in them. God is the God of grace. He gives the ear that hears his voice, the eye that sees his beauty; for it is he that opens the understanding.

13. Those that indulge themselves may expect to want necessities, which should have been gotten by honest labour; therefore love not sleep as those do that hate business. Those that stir up themselves to their business, may expect bread; if they do not grow rich, yet they shall have enough. It must be said to many, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

14. What arts men use to get a good bargain, and to buy cheap! See how apt men are to be pleased with their gettings, and proud of their tricks; whereas a fraud and a lie a man ought to be ashamed of, though he gain much by them.

15. Gold and precious stones were very plentiful in the days of Solomon, and wisdom ought to have been equally plentiful under so wise a prince, but it remained still a rarity.

He that prefers the lips of true knowledge to riches, follows the ways of religion and happiness. If we really believed this truth, the word of God would be valued as it deserves, and the world would lose its tempting influence.—(46.)

16. Two sorts of persons are here spoken of, that ruin themselves. 1. Those who entangle themselves in rash suretiship, to oblige their idle companions. 2. Those who are in league with abandoned women. Place no confidence in either.

In this and other similar passages Solomon does not condemn suretiship, which in many cases is an act of justice, prudence, and charity, but forbids becoming surety rashly, without considering for whom a man binds himself, and whether he can discharge the debt.—(33.)

17. Sin may be pleasant in the commission; wealth gotten by fraud may be sweet, such pleasure does the carnal mind take in the success of wicked projects.

All the pleasures and profits of sin are bread of deceit, for they are forbidden fruit, and they will deceive men. But it will be bitter in the reflection. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and are succeeded by sorrows.

18. It is good in every thing to act with deliberation, and to consult in matters of moment with our friends.

Especially we have need of advice in our spiritual warfare. We may receive great benefit from counsels of others, but the word and Spirit of God are infinitely the best counsellors in this and in every point. Those only shall overcome who cry to God for help, are strong in Him, and use the weapons prepared for their defence. These are the counsels given us by the Spirit of God, and as our success depends entirely upon his help, we must follow his instructions.—(46.)

19. Talebearers are commonly flatterers. They accompany slanders of the absent with flatteries of those present, in both addressing themselves to the corruptions of the heart. Those too dearly buy their own praise, who put confidence in a man, because he speaks fairly to them.

20. An undutiful child will become very miserable at last. Never let him expect any peace or comfort. The lamp of his happiness shall be put out in the blackness of darkness, so the word is, even that which is for ever, Jude 13.

21. It is possible that an estate may be soon raised; but an estate that is suddenly raised, is often as suddenly ruined; it was raised hastily, but, not being raised honestly, the end thereof shall not be blessed of God; and if he do not bless it, it can neither be comfortable, nor of any continuance.

22. We must not avenge ourselves, nor so much as think of it, or design it. Never say that thou wilt do a thing which thou canst not in faith pray to God to assist thee in. Wait on the Lord, attend his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, and he will protect thee, so that passing by one injury shall not, as is feared, expose to another.

23. Probably fraud in buying and selling was a sin very much practised at that time in Israel, therefore made light of, as among us. But a bargain made by fraud will prove a losing bargain in the end.

24. Ungodly men can proceed no further than the Lord is pleased to permit; godly men have all their good desires, counsels, and strength from him. How

then can we form plans, conduct operations, or accomplish designs independently of the Lord? But if we observe his precepts, rely on his promises, and submit to his providences, he will direct our goings.

25. What is devoted to the service and honour of God, for the support of religion and Divine worship, or the relief of the poor, ought to be conscientiously preserved to the purposes designed; and those who defeat the purpose for which they were given, will have a great deal to answer for. It is a snare to a man, after he has made vows to God to contrive excuses for violating them. The evasions men often use with their own consciences show how false and deceitful man is.

26. As the wheel crushed the sheaves in forcing out the corn, so impartial justice should crush the wicked, and separate them from the virtuous.

26. A common mode of threshing in the east was by driving the wheels of a cart, often constructed for the purpose, over the sheaves.

27. The rational soul and conscience are as a lamp within us, which should be continually used in examining our dispositions and motives, compared with the revealed will of God. This light should not be obscured by ignorance or self-delusion, nor employed in contriving or apologizing for iniquity. The grace of God causes this lamp to burn clearly, and to good purposes.

28. The virtues of a good king are mercy and truth. They are the glories of God's throne.

29. Both young and old have their advantages, and therefore must each of them be, according to their capacities, serviceable to the public, and let neither of them despise or envy the other.

30. The wise God sees that his own children sometimes need very sharp afflictions. Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good. The rod drives out that foolishness which was bound up in the heart, and cleanses away the evil there. Frequently those that most need severe rebukes, can worst bear them. Such is the corruption of nature, that men are loth to be rebuked for their sins. If God use the corrosives of severe afflictions, to purify our hearts and fit us for his service, we have cause to be very thankful.

30. "The bruises of a wound are a cleanser in a wicked man." Stripes properly inflicted, purify the heart.—Holden.

CHAPTER XXI.

1. The believer, perceiving that the Lord rules every heart as he pleaseth, seeks to have his own heart directed in his faith, fear, and love, and relies on Him to change and direct the hearts of others. God can turn men's minds from that which they are most intent upon, and incline them to that which they are most averse to, as the husbandman turns the water through his grounds as he pleases. Yet the water runs according to its own nature, without any force put upon it.

1. The method of watering land in the east is described in the note, Deut. 11. 10.

2. We are all partial in judging of ourselves and our actions. God looks at the heart, and judges the actions of men according to their principles and intentions.

3. Many deceive themselves with a conceit that outward devotions will procure them a dispensation for unrighteousness. But to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than any sacrifices we can offer, though they cannot supersede the necessity of the Redeemer's sacrifice of inestimable value, or of our entire dependence upon it.

4. This shows us the marks of a wicked man. He has a high look and a proud heart, and is always designing and devising some mischief. The light of the wicked is sin. Sin is the pride, the ambition, the glory, and joy, and the business of wicked men. Or, the loftiness, pride, and all the prosperity of the wicked are sinful; for their hearts being corrupt, they abuse the good gifts of God.—(36.)

4. "The high look, and the proud heart, and the lamp of the wicked are sin."—Holden.

5. The really diligent employ foresight and contrivance as well as labour. Those that are rash and inconsiderate, or make haste to be rich by unjust practices, or unwise projects, are in the road to poverty.

6. This shows the folly of those that enrich themselves by dishonest practices. They will not meet with the satisfaction they expect; it will be disappointment and vexation of spirit to them. While they seek wealth by such unlawful practices, they really seek death, they lay themselves open to the envy and ill will of men, and to the wrath of God.

7. See here the nature of injustice; it is robbery. Cheating is stealing. See the cause of injustice. Men will not render to all their due, and omissions make way for

commissions. See the effect of injustice; it will return upon the sinner, will terrify him; will destroy him here and for ever.

8. The way of mankind in their apostasy is froward and strange, but those who by the grace of God are recovered out of that state, will show it by their works being according to God's word.

9. If patience be thus tried, it is better to shun embittered contention by seeking retirement, to pour out the heart before God, than to run into temptation, excess, or vain company. By prudence, and patience, with constant prayer, the cross may be removed, or its worst effects prevented.

10. The evil desires of a wicked man's heart, lead to baseness in his conduct. None are safe that stand in the way of the gratification of his desires.

11. There are two ways by which the simple may be made wise. 1. By punishments inflicted on those that are incorrigibly wicked. 2. By the instructions that are given to those that are wise and willing to be taught.

12. As we read this verse, it shows why good men will not envy the prosperity of evil-doers; they see that there is a curse upon them.

12. The Just One acts wisely towards the house of the wicked, overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness.—Holden.

13. Such as oppress the poor by beating down their wages; such as will not relieve according to their ability those they know to be in distress; those in authority who neglect to do justice;—stop their ears at the cry of the poor. But doubtless care and discrimination are to be used in the exercise of charity.

14. Presents, especially if prudently and privately given, have a strong tendency to appease anger and wrath.—(10.) Have gifts such a powerful influence? If money can conquer the fury of the passions, shall reason, the fear of God, and he command of Christ be too weak to bridle them?—(46.)

15. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to good men, to see justice administered, and iniquity suppressed. There is true pleasure in the practice of religion, but certain destruction follows vicious courses.

16. The way of religion is the way of understanding; those that follow the conduct of the world and the flesh, go astray like lost sheep. He that forsakes the way to heaven, if he return not to it, will certainly sink into the depths of hell.

Of all wanderers in the ways of sin, those are in the most dangerous condition who once appeared to be walking in the ways of understanding, but have turned aside into the ways of darkness. Let revolting sinners consider the greatness of their guilt and danger. There is hope even yet for them in the all-sufficient Saviour; but let them flee to him without delay, before the fierce anger of the Lord be poured out. Those who walk in the light must die, but their death is entrance into a better life; it cannot dissolve their connexion with the Lord of life.—(46.)

17. Here is an argument against a voluptuous, luxurious life, from the ruin it brings on men's temporal interests.

18. By the providence of God, the righteous is often delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead, and so seems as if he were a ransom for him.

19. Unbridled passions embitter and spoil the comfort of all relations. Even those that are one flesh, if not withal one spirit, have no joy of their union.

20. The plenty which is obtained by prudence, industry, and frugality, is desirable. This is to be found in the dwellings of the wise. Oil was one of the chief productions of Canaan, and may be put for plenty of things needful. The foolish mispend what they have, upon their lusts.

21. True repentance and faith will induce him that relies on the mercy of God in Christ, to follow after righteousness and mercy in his own conduct; thus he finds life, righteousness, and honour.

22. Those that have wisdom often perform great things, even against those that are confident of their strength. Good conduct will go far even against force. A wise man will gain upon the affections, and conquer by strength of reason, which is more noble than strength of arms.

23. It is our great concern to keep our soul from being entangled in perplexities, and disquieted with troubles. Those that would keep their souls, must keep the mouth by temperance, they must keep the tongue also, that no corrupt communication go out.

24. Pride and haughtiness expose men to sin, and make them passionate; such are continually dealing in wrath, as if it were their trade to be angry, and they had nothing so much to do as to barter passions, and exchange bitter words. Most of the wrath that inflames the spirits and

societies of men, is proud wrath. Men cannot bear the least slight, nor to be crossed, but they are out of humour immediately. It exposes to shame.

25, 26. Here is the misery of the slothful, whose hands refuse to labour in an honest calling, by which they might get an honest livelihood; though their hands refuse to labour, their hearts cease not to covet riches, and pleasures, and honours, which cannot be obtained without labour. The desires of those that are slothful in the affairs of their souls, and yet wish for that which would be their happiness, will be witnesses against them. The righteous and industrious have their desires satisfied, and enjoy not only that, but the satisfaction of doing good to others.

27. When men make a show of devotion, that they may compass some evil design; when holiness is pretended, but wickedness intended; then, especially, the performance is an abomination, Isa. 66. 5.

27. Or, "Because he bringeth it."—*Poole*.

28. Here is the doom of a false witness; the vengeance he imprecated upon himself, when he took the false oath, will come upon him. He who hears, obeys the command of God, which is to speak every man truth with his neighbour; he speaks consistently with himself.

29. A wicked man, when he commits the greatest crimes, bids defiance to the terrors of the law, and the checks of his own conscience, the reproofs of the word, and the rebukes of Providence. A good man says, What does God require of me? What is my duty? And so he directs his way by a safe and certain rule.

30, 31. The busy part of mankind are here directed to look to God, and to believe. 1. That there can be no success against God, and therefore they must never act in opposition to him. 2. That there can be no success without God, therefore they must never act but in dependence on him. Means are to be used, but, after all, safety and salvation is of the Lord.

In our spiritual warfare we must arm ourselves with the whole armour of God, but our strength must be in the Lord, and in the power of his might. If we must trust him for safety in fighting with flesh and blood, how can we wrestle successfully against the powers of hell, without his Divine succour? Salvations of every kind belong to him.—(46.)

CHAPTER XXII.

1. We should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name, than that by which we may raise and increase a great estate. Christ had neither silver nor gold, but he grew in favour with God and man. This should teach us not to set our hearts upon the wealth of this world, but with all care to think on those things that are lovely, and of good report, Phil. 4. 8.

2. Divine Providence has so ordered it, that some are rich and others poor, and these are intermixed in society; the Lord is the Maker of both; both the Author of their being, and the Disposer of their lot. Rich and poor meet together at the bar of God's justice; all guilty before God, concluded under sin, and shapen in iniquity, the rich as much as the poor; and they meet at the throne of God's grace; the poor are as welcome there as the rich. There are the same Christ, the same scripture, the same Spirit, the same covenant of promises, for both. There is the same heaven for poor saints as for rich; Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham: and there is the same hell for rich sinners that there is for poor. All stand upon the same level before God, as they do also in the grave.

3. In temporal affairs we can seldom proceed beyond probabilities; but in the concerns of our souls faith foresees the evil coming upon sinners, and discerns Jesus Christ as the sure refuge from this impending storm.

4. We must so reverence God, as to submit with all humility to the commands of his word, and the disposals of his providence. We must have such low thoughts of ourselves, as to behave humbly toward God and man. Where the fear of God is, there will be humility. Much is to be gotten by it; at least, spiritual riches and honour in the favour of God, and the promises and privileges of the covenant of grace, and eternal life at last.

5. The way of sin is vexatious and dangerous; in it thorns and snares are found; thorns of grief for past sins, and snares entangling in further sin. The way of duty is safe and easy.

6. Train up children to keep them from sins and snares. Catechise them, keep them under discipline. Train them up, not in the way they *would* go, the bias of their corrupt hearts would draw them aside, but in the way they *should* go, the

way in which, if you love them, you would have them go. Many indeed have departed from the good way in which they were trained up; Solomon himself did so; but it may be a means of their recovery. At least, parents will have done their duty, and used the means.

Every child should be taught he is a sinner, and as such exposed to God's anger. The efficacy of this upon the young mind is most desirable. Nothing more effectually checks the growth of pride. Without this instruction, all other religious teaching will be in vain. He who is not conscious that he is a sinner will never take a step towards salvation, and as soon as possible every child should be led to the knowledge of the Saviour.—(17.)

7. As to the things of this life, there is a difference between the rich and poor, for those that have little, will be in subjection to those that have much, because they have dependence upon them. It also shows how important it is for every man to keep out of debt, and to be as little under obligations to others as may be. But let the poor remember, it is the Lord that made the difference, ver. 2, let them submit to his wise and righteous will.

8. The power which many abuse, will soon fail them, and then they must reap the fruits of their injustice and oppression.

9. He that looks upon the wants and miseries of others with compassion and kindness, shall be blessed both of God and man.—(34.)

10. Profane scoffers and revilers will disturb the peace wherever they gain admission; the only method of restoring peace is to expel them.

11. Here is the qualification of one that is fit to be employed, and the preferment such a man stands fair for. A man in whose spirit there is no guile, whose speech is with grace, God will be his friend, Messiah, the Prince, will be his friend: this honour have all the saints.

12. Here is the special care God takes to preserve knowledge, by keeping among men the knowledge of himself and of good and evil, notwithstanding the corruption of mankind, and the artifices of Satan to blind men's minds, and keep them in ignorance. The marvellous preservation of the scriptures in a more perfect state than any other works of such antiquity, is a proof how the Lord preserves knowledge. He defeats the counsels

and designs of treacherous men, and turns them to their own confusion.

13. Multitudes are ruined, both for soul and body, by their slothfulness, and yet still they have something or other to say for themselves; so ingenious are men in putting a cheat upon their own souls!

Lions are not found in the streets; this shows the folly of the excuse.—(54.)

Many frighten themselves from real duties by imaginary difficulties. The slothful man talks of a lion without, but considers not his real danger from the devil, that roaring lion, which is within, and from his own slothfulness, which kills him.

14. This warns against licentiousness. Those who abandon themselves to that sin, prove that they are abandoned of God. Very seldom do they recover themselves, it so besots the mind, and debauches the conscience.

15. Sin is foolishness, it is contrary both to our right reason and to our true interest; it is in the heart, there is an inward inclination to sin, to speak and act foolishly; it is in the heart of children, they bring it into the world with them; it is not only found there, but it is bound there, it cleaves close to the soul. It is true of ourselves, it is true of our children. Children need to be corrected, and kept under discipline, by their parents; and we all need to be corrected by our heavenly Father, Heb. 12. 6, 7, and under the correction we must kiss the rod.

Let none think that by "foolishness" the sacred writer means only those silly tricks which discover a weakness of understanding in children. The word "folly" throughout the Proverbs, denotes a failure, not in the intellectual, but in the religious and moral character.—(31.)

16. They that oppress the poor, rob God, and so make him their enemy; they cannot secure themselves by giving to the rich, to make them their friends.

We are not proprietors but stewards of the gifts of providence, and must distribute what God has intrusted to our care, according to his will.—(46.)

17—21. Solomon here changes his manner of speaking. For the most part, since the beginning of ch. 10, he had laid down doctrinal truths, and but now and then added a word of exhortation; but here, to the end of ch. 24, he speaks as to a particular person: hitherto, for the most part, his

sense was comprised in one verse, but here usually it extends further.

Here is an earnest exhortation to get wisdom and grace, by attending to the words of the wisemen, both written and preached; the words of the prophets and priests; and particularly to that knowledge which Solomon in this book gives men of good and evil, sin and duty, rewards and punishments. To these words, to this knowledge, the ear must be bowed down, in humility and serious attention; and the heart applied by faith and love, and close consideration. The ear will not serve without the heart.

These things must be kept by us, that we may have confidence in God, and so may have comfort in him, and communion with him. To live a life of delight in God and dependence on him, is the foundation of all practical religion. It is desirable to know, not only the words of truth, but their certainty; that our faith may be rational, and may grow up to a full assurance. The way to know the certainty of the words of truth, is, to make conscience of our duty; for if any man do his will, he shall know for certain that the doctrine is of God, John 7. 17. And those who make conscience of keeping God's commandments, will be best able to give a reason of the hope that is in them.

22, 23. Rich men will not suffer themselves to be wronged, poor men cannot help it, and therefore we ought to be the more careful not to wrong them. He that robs and oppresses the poor, it is at his peril. If men will not appear for them, God will.

24, 25. A man who is easily provoked, who, when he is in a passion, cares not what he says or does, is not fit to be made a friend or companion; for he will be angry with us, and that will be our trouble, and will expect that we should be angry with others, and that will be our sin. Our corrupt hearts have so much tinder in them, that it is dangerous conversing with those that throw about the sparks of their passion; for a disposition to anger is a great snare, and an occasion of much sin.

26, 27. We have here, as often before, a caution against suretiship. Every man ought to be just to himself, and to his family; those are not so, who live above what they have, who by the mismanagement of their own affairs, or by incumbering themselves with the debts of others, waste what they have, and bring themselves to poverty.

28. We are here taught not to invade another man's right. Let not property in general be entrenched upon, by robbing men of their liberties and privileges. Let not the property of any be encroached on.

29. Here is a plain intimation, what a hard thing it is to find a truly ingenious, industrious man. Such a man will rise. Seest thou a man diligent in the business of religion? He is likely to excel, and shall stand before the King of kings. Let us then be diligent in God's work; though we live and die in a mean condition as to this world, we shall be numbered with the princes of his people, and stand with acceptance before the King of glory.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1—3. The sin we are here warned against, is, luxury and sensuality, and the indulgence of the appetite in eating and drinking, a sin that easily besets us. We are here told when we enter into temptation, and are in most danger of falling into this sin; when thou hast great plenty before thee, varieties and dainties, such as thou hast seldom seen, put a knife to thy throat, restrain thyself, as with a sword hanging over thy head, from all excess.

It must lessen a man's character to be delighted with an opportunity for self-indulgence; nor should the excesses and carnal pleasures of others be sanctioned; by example, at least, we may always protest against them. God requires his rational creatures to be the lords, not the slaves of animal appetites. His prohibitions only say to us, Do thyself no harm.

2. This is rendered by some, "Thou hast put a knife to thy throat, if thou art a man given to appetite." Sensual gratifications are frequent causes of sickness, weakness, and death. *Lawson.*

4, 5. Be not of those that will be rich, that desire it as their chief good, and design it as their highest end, 1 Tim. 6. 9. Moderate labour, that we may have to give, is our wisdom and duty, Eph. 4. 28. Immoderate labour, that we may have to hoard, is our sin and folly. Acquiesce in God's wisdom, and cease from thine own, ch. 3. 5, 6. The things of this world are things that are not. They have a real existence in nature, and are the real gifts of Providence, but in the kingdom of grace they are things that are not; they are not a happiness and portion for a soul; are not what they promise to be, nor what we expect them to be. Riches are very uncertain, they will leave us; those that

hold them ever so fast, cannot hold them always, cannot hold them long. They are wasting in their own nature, and slip away. They go irresistibly and irrecoverably, as an eagle flies out of sight and out of call, there is no bringing her back; thus riches leave men in grief and vexation if they set their hearts on them.

6—8. There can be no comfort in accepting entertainments that are given grudgingly. Do not make thyself burdensome to any; but especially those that are not sincere. He bids thee eat freely, but, first or last, he will give thee to understand that thou art not welcome, and all thy words are wasted upon him.

When we are called by God to his feast, and hear his blessed voice inviting us to eat that which is good, and to let our souls delight themselves, Isa. 25. 6; 55. 2, we may safely venture, at the gracious invitation to partake of the bread of life, and use the blessings of salvation as our own. To suspect the sincerity of the gospel call, is to suspect Him who is abundant in goodness and truth.—(46.)

9. We are here directed not to expose things sacred to the contempt and ridicule of profane scoffers. It is our duty to take all fit occasions to speak of Divine things; but if what a wise man says will not be heard, let him hold his peace.

10, 11. The fatherless are taken under God's special protection; with him they not only find mercy showed to them, but justice done for them. He is their Redeemer, their near kinsman, who will take their part. As their Redeemer, he will plead their cause against those who do them injury, and will avenge the wrongs done to them. He is mighty, almighty.

12—16. Here is a parent *instructing* his child, persuading him to give his mind especially to the scriptures; to attend to the words of knowledge, to apply his heart to them, to delight in them, and bow his will to the authority of them. Here is a parent *correcting* his child. For the present, it is not joyous but grievous, both to the parent and to the child; but when given with wisdom, designed for good, accompanied with prayer, and blessed of God, it may prove a means of preventing his utter destruction. Our great care must be about our children's souls; we must not see them in danger of hell without using all possible means, with the utmost care and concern, to snatch them as brands out of everlasting burnings.

Here is a parent *encouraging* his child, telling him that what he expected would be for his own good. And what a comfort it would be to him, if herein he answered his expectation! The wisdom of children will be the joy of their parents and teachers, who have no greater joy than to see them walk in the truth.

17, 18. When we constantly act as in the presence of the Lord, seeking to please him, and expecting help and happiness from him, then we are in the fear of the Lord all the day long. The believer's expectation shall not be disappointed; the end of their trials, and of the sinner's prosperity is at hand.

19—28. The gracious Saviour who purchased pardon and peace for his people, with all the affection of a tender parent counsels us to hear and be wise, and to guide our hearts in his way; at the same time he is ready to strengthen us to obey his injunctions. Here we have an earnest call to young people to attend to the advice of their godly parents. Wisdom, as faith, comes by hearing. We ought to give reverence to the fathers of our flesh; much more ought we to obey, and be in subjection to the Father of our spirits, who is the Author of ~~our~~ being. Scornful and insolent young men may make a jest of the good advice of an aged mother, but such will have a great deal to answer for another day.

An argument to enforce this call is taken from the great comfort which this will be to their parents, ver. 24, 25. Children will be a joy to their parents, if they are righteous and wise.

Here are some general precepts of wisdom and virtue. It is the heart that must be taken care of, and directed aright, ver. 19. If the heart be guided, the steps will be guided, the conversation well ordered.

Buy the truth, and sell it not, ver. 23. We must buy it, be willing to part with any thing for it; whatever it costs us, we shall not repent. We must not sell it; do not part with it for pleasures, honours, riches, any thing in this world. Many, like the rich young man, Matt. 19, 22, will not go to the price of becoming disciples of Christ; others, like Demas, 2 Tim. 4, 10, forsake him and sell the truth, having loved the present world; but true christians count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

Give me thine heart, ver. 26. God, in this exhortation, speaks to us as unto chil-

dren. The heart is what the great God requires and calls for from every one of us; whatever we give, if we do not give him our hearts, it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon him. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; he will have all or none. To this call we must readily answer, My father, take my heart, such as it is, and make it such as it should be; take possession of it, and set up thy throne in it.

Let thine eyes observe my ways, ver. 26. Have an eye to the rule of God's word, the conduct of his providence, and the good examples of his people.

Particular cautions are given against those sins which are, of all others, the most destructive to the seeds of wisdom and grace in the soul, which impoverish and ruin it. Some take not only a pleasure, but a pride in being curious about their diet, and, as they call it, eating well; as if that were an ornament which is really a shame, making a god of the belly. Drunkenness is the cause of drowsiness; it stupifies men, and makes them inattentive to business, and then all goes to ruin. Licentiousness is another sin which takes away the heart, that should be given to God, Hos. 4, 11. He shows the danger which attends it. Take heed of any approaches toward this sin, because it is so hard to make a retreat from it, ver. 27. It bewitches men to their ruin. It is a sin that contributes more than any other to spread vice and immorality. It increases transgressors.

29—35. Solomon here gives warning against drunkenness. He cautions all to keep out of the way of temptation to this sin, ver. 31. Those that would be kept from any sin, must keep themselves from all the occasions and beginnings of it, and fear coming within the reach of its allurements, lest they be overcome by them.

To take off the force of temptation which is in the pleasure of the sin, foresees the punishment, what it will at last end in, if repentance prevent not. He specifies those pernicious consequences of this sin, which are present and sensible. It embroils men in quarrels, makes them quarrel with others. Many have woe and sorrow, and cannot help it; but drunkards wilfully create woe and sorrow to themselves. O the precious hours which thousands throw away thus, every one of which will be brought into the account at the

great day! It makes men impure and insolent, ver. 33. The tongue also grows unruly, and talks extravagantly; the heart utters perverse things, contrary to reason, religion, and common civility, which they would be ashamed to speak if sober.

It stupifies and besots men, ver. 34. When men are drunk, they know not where they are, nor what they say and do. They are in imminent danger of death, of damnation,—lie as much exposed as if they slept upon the top of a mast, and yet are secure! They fear no peril when the terrors of the Lord are laid before them; nay, they feel no pain when the judgments of God are actually upon them. So lost is a drunkard to virtue and honour, so wretchedly is his conscience seared, that he is not ashamed to say, I will seek it again. This is adding drunkenness to thirst, and following strong drink; those that do so, may read their doom, Deut. 29. 19, 20, their woe, Isa. 5. 11: if this be the end of the sin, with good reason were we bid to stop before the beginning; Look not upon the wine when it is red. Who that has common sense would contract a habit, or sell himself to an iniquity which tends to such accumulated guilt and misery, and exposes a man every day to the danger of dying intoxicated, and awaking in hell?

Surely this striking picture of the vice of drunkenness must excite our detestation. What excuse is left for a drunkard that has ever read the bible? How will his mouth be stopped at the last day! How he will curse himself through eternity for making himself first a beast, and then a devil!—(46.)

Wisdom seems in these chapters to resume the discourse as at the beginning of the book, for many things cannot well be limited to Solomon addressing his son, or the reader. They must be considered as the words of Christ to the sinner. Let us then seek to live in the fear of God all the day long, and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

30. Mixed wine was not wine lowered by water, but made stronger by spices and other ingredients.

CHAPTER XXIV.

1, 2. Envy not sinners. Let not a desire ever come into thy mind, O that I could shake off restraints, and take liberty to indulge the appetites. All that evil men say has a tendency to dishonour

God, reproach religion, or wrong their neighbour; but it will be mischief to themselves at last.

3—6. Piety toward God, for that alone is true wisdom, and prudence in the management of our outward affairs, are here recommended to us. Both must go together to complete a wise man. By knowledge the chambers of the soul are filled with the graces and comforts of the Spirit, those precious and pleasant riches; for the Spirit, by enlightening the understanding, performs his operations on the soul. As we grow in knowledge, we grow in all grace, 2 Pet. 3. 18. Those that increase in wisdom, are strengthened with all might, Col. 1. 9, 11. A wise man will compass that by wisdom, which a strong man cannot effect by force. The spirit is strengthened both for the spiritual work, and the spiritual warfare, by true wisdom. In the multitude of counsellors there is safety, for one may foresee danger, and discern advantages, which another cannot.

7—9. A weak man thinks wisdom is too high for him, and therefore he will take no pains in the pursuit of it. Devising evil is the thought of foolishness. It is made light of, as only a foolish thing, but really it is sin, it is exceeding sinful. It is bad to do evil, but it is worse to devise it. But it may be taken more generally. We contract guilt, not only by the act of foolishness, but by the thought of it; the first risings of sin in the heart are sin, offensive to God, and must be repented of. The scorner is an abomination to men; none that have any sense of honour and virtue will keep company with him. Those that strive to make others odious, make themselves so.

10. In the day of adversity we are apt to be discouraged, and to despair of relief. Our spirits sink, and then we become unfit for any thing. Some are so feeble, that they can bear nothing; if a trouble does but touch them, nay, if it does but threaten, they are ready to give up all for gone. Be of good courage, and God shall strengthen thy heart.

11, 12. If any man know that his neighbour is in danger by any unjust proceeding, he is bound to do all in his power to deliver him. Let him not make any false excuses, for the Lord seeth and will expose them. Let this serve to silence all our frivolous pleas, by which we think to stop the mouth of conscience when it charges us with the omission of plain

duty. Does not He that ponders the heart, consider it? He will judge accordingly.

Christ laid down his life for us, and we ought to risk every thing dear to us, in the cause of righteousness. Safety cometh from the Lord, our Judge and Lawgiver. He will not forget the works of faith and the labours of love, and he will never suffer any man to be a loser by them. And if we must not forbear to succour those whose lives are exposed to danger, what is it to suffer immortal souls to perish, when our persuasions, instructions, and example may be a means of preventing it?—(46.)

13, 14. We are here quickened to the study of wisdom by the consideration both of the pleasure and the profit of it. They that have tasted honey, need no further proof that it is sweet, nor can they by any argument be convinced of the contrary; so those who experience the power of truth and godliness taste the sweetness of them, and none can alter their sentiments.

All men relish things that are sweet to the palate; but there are many who have no spiritual taste to relish the things that are sweet to the purified soul. Honey, milk, and wine are tasteless when compared with that knowledge of God and of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, which makes us wise unto salvation. The sweetness of honey lasts but for a moment; but the sweetness of Wisdom is everlasting. The sweetness thereof is experienced more and more fully in our religious progress, but most of all at the end of our course. Let christians hope for that end, for the grace that shall be brought them at the revelation of Jesus Christ.—(46.)

15, 16. Observe the designs of the wicked against the righteous, and the success they promise themselves. All this is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman.

The sincere soul falls as a traveller may do, by stumbling at some stone in his path; but gets up and goes on his way with more care and speed. The hypocrite falls as a man from the top of a mast, that is engulfed past recovering in the sea.—(28.) It is rather to be understood of falls into affliction, than falls into actual sin.—(56.)

17, 18. The pleasure we are apt to take in the troubles of an enemy is forbidden. The provocation which that pleasure gives to God is assigned as the reason; for, as

the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, so the righteousness of God was never intended to gratify the wrath of man; rather than seem to do that, he will put off the execution of his wrath: nay, it implies, that when he turns wrath from him, he will turn it against thee.

19, 20. See Ps. 37. 1. We must not make ourselves uneasy, whatever God does in his providence; how disagreeable soever it is to our sentiments, interests, and expectations, we must acquiesce in it. Even that which grieves us, must not fret us; nor must our eye be evil against any because God is good. He gives a reason for this caution, taken from the end of that way which wicked men walk in; envy not their prosperity, for there is no true happiness in it.

21, 22. As men, it is our duty to honour our Creator, to worship and reverence him, and to be always in his fear; as members of a community, united for mutual benefit, it is our duty to be faithful and dutiful to the government God has set over us, Rom. 13. 1, 2. The godly in the land will be the quiet in the land. He does not say, Have nothing to do with them that change, for there may be cause to change for the better, but, that are given to change, that affect it, out of discontent with that which is, and fondness for novelty. Those that are of restless, factious, turbulent spirits, pull mischief upon their own heads ere they are aware.

23—26. The wisdom God giveth renders a man fit for his station, whatever it be. We must never connive at, or encourage wicked people in their wicked practices. Let magistrates and ministers, and private persons too, that are capable, rebuke the wicked, that they may bring them to repentance, or put them to shame. He will meet with general respect and affection, who speaks honestly, seasonably, and to the point. Every one who experiences the benefit of the right answer will be attached to him that gave it.

27. We must prefer necessities before conveniences, and not lay that out for show, which should be expended for the support of the family. We must be content with a mean habitation, rather than want, or go in debt.

28, 29. There are three defaults in a witness pointed out. 1. When he, without necessity, or being bound in conscience thereto, reveals the secret actions of an-

other. 2. When he bears false witness, or suborns others. 3. When he bears witness through malice or for revenge.—(16.)

30—34. See the effects of that curse upon the ground, Gen. 3. 18, Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and nothing else, unless thou take pains with it. See what a blessing the husbandman's calling is, and what a wilderness this earth would be without it. See what a great difference there is in the management even of worldly affairs. Instruction may be received, not only from what we read and hear, but from what we see; not only from the works of God, but from the manners of men.

Sloth and self-indulgence are the bane of all good. When we pass the field of the slothful, and the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and see them overgrown with thorns and thistles, and the fences broken down, we see an emblem of the far more deplorable state of many souls. Every vile affection grows exceedingly in their hearts; all their faculties are thrown open to every evil suggestion of Satan and his agents; nothing good has any root there; everlasting poverty is coming upon them; yet they compose themselves to sleep. Let us then show our wisdom by redoubling our diligence in every good thing, and not be slothful about our eternal interests.

CHAPTER XXV.

1. These proverbs were Solomon's, who was divinely inspired to deliver, for the use of the church, these wise and weighty sentences. The publishers were appointed by Hezekiah to do this good service to the church, among other good offices that he did, 2 Chron. 31. 21.

2, 3. God needs not search into any thing, nothing can be hid from him; and there is an unfathomable depth in his counsels, Rom. 11. 33. We see what he does, but we know not the reasons. Some refer it to the sins of men; it is his glory to pardon sin, which is, covering it, not remembering it, not mentioning it; his forbearance which he exercises toward sinners, is likewise his honour, in which he seems to keep silence.

But it is the honour of kings, with a close application to search out the matters that are brought before them, to bring to light the hidden works of darkness; not to give judgment till they have

weighed things, and to see with their own eyes. Yet wise kings have designs which are kept private, reasons of which private persons are not competent judges.

4, 5. The vigorous endeavours of a prince to suppress vice, and reform his people, is the most effectual way to support his government; for God will bless his government, the people will be obedient to it, and so it will become durable.

6, 7. Religion teaches us humility and self-denial; this is really the way to advancement, as our Saviour shows, Luke 14. 9. Not that we must therefore pretend modesty and humility, and make a stratagem of it, for the courting of honour; but because God will put honour on such. He who has seen the glory of the Lord, in Christ Jesus, will be sensible of his own unworthiness.

8—10. To be hasty in beginning any kind of contention will bring into difficulties. Hasty entrance upon religious controversy is most perilous to a man's spirit, and often most injurious to the welfare of the church. In public quarrels, the war that must at length end, might better have been prevented. It is so in private quarrels; Sue not thy neighbour until thou hast told him his fault between thee and him, and he has refused to come to an accommodation. Perhaps the matter in variance is not fit to be divulged, and therefore end it privately, that it may not be discovered. Do not, in revenge, to disgrace thine adversary, disclose that which should be kept private.

11, 12. A word of counsel, encouragement, or reproof, when spoken with propriety and suited to the occasion, is especially beautiful, as fine fruit becomes still more beautiful in silver network or baskets. To give a reproof with discretion, so as to make it acceptable, well becomes both the reprover and the reproved.

11. Or, golden apples (citrons) in silver baskets.

13. See here what ought to be the care of him that is sent on an errand, and intrusted with any business; he ought to be faithful to him that sends him. See how much this will be the satisfaction of the master; it will refresh him as snow, which in hot countries, preserved by art all the year round, refreshes those that bear the burden and heat of the day. A faithful minister, Christ's messenger, should be thus acceptable to us.

14. He boasts of a false gift who pretends to have received or given that

which he never had, which he never gave; or makes a noise of his great accomplishments, and his good services. Such are like the morning cloud, that disappoints those who looked for rain to water the parched ground; Clouds without water.

15. Two things are here recommended to us. 1. Patience, to bear a present hurt without being put into a heat by it, and to wait for a fit opportunity to offer our reasons. 2. Mildness, to speak without passion or provocation; soft persuasive language generally is the most effectual to prevail over the hardened mind, and stubborn resolution.

16. We are allowed a sober and moderate use of the delights of sense. God having created things grateful to our senses, has given us leave to make use of them, but we are cautioned to take heed of excess.

17. Our intercourse with our neighbours cannot be conducted with comfort and cordiality, without discretion as well as sincerity. Unseasonable and too frequent visits will excite disgust. How much better a Friend is God than any other friend; for we are told not to withdraw our foot from his house, the throne of his grace, ch. 8. 34; the oftener we come to him, the better, the more welcome.

18. Bearing false witness against our neighbour, in judgment, or in common conversation, is here condemned; a false testimony is every thing that is dangerous.

19. Confidence in an unfaithful man proves not only unserviceable, but painful and vexatious, like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint, which, when we put any stress upon it, not only fails us, but makes us feel from it. Confidence in a faithful God, in time of trouble, will not prove thus; on him we may rest, and in him dwell at ease.

20. Those that are in great sorrow, are to be comforted by sympathizing with them, condoling with them, and concurring in their lamentation: we take a wrong course, if we think to relieve them by endeavouring to make them merry.

20. What is here translated nitre does not mean saltpetre, but natron, an alkali, which, like carbonate of soda, effervesces with acids.

21, 22. The commandment of not only loving our brethren, but even our enemies, was an old testament commandment. Our Saviour has given it the enforcement of his own great example in

loving us when we were enemies. We must express our love to our enemies, by real offices of kindness. It will be a likely means to win upon them, and mollify them as the refiner melts the metal in the crucible, not only by putting it over the fire, but by heaping coals of fire upon it. We shall be no losers thereby.

Or Solomon is here alluding to the Divine vengeance; in showing kindness to thine enemy, thou wilt not encourage him in his persecution, but wilt leave his cause where it ought to be left, in the hands of God.—(14.)

23. Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are, if they were not readily heard. If we cannot otherwise reprove, we may do it by our looks. Sin, if it be countenanced, becomes daring, but if it receive any check, it becomes cowardly.

24. Observe how those are to be pitied, that are unequally yoked. It is better to be alone, than to be joined to one, who, instead of being a help, is a great hindrance to the comfort of life.

25. How natural it is to desire to hear good news from our friends, and concerning our affairs at a distance! Were there ever such tidings proclaimed as the tidings of salvation? What waters to a thirsty soul can equal the gratification of the thirst of the soul, when satisfied with redemption in Christ? Heaven is a country afar off; how refreshing is it to hear good news from thence, in the everlasting gospel, which signifies glad tidings, and in the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God's children.

26. When the righteous are decoyed into sin, or are degraded from their influence and authority, it is as hurtful to a church or nation, as if the public fountains were corrupted and poisoned.—(19.)

27. We must be, through grace, dead to the pleasures of sense, and also to the praises of men.

28. The man who has no command over his anger, is open to every assault; any man may exasperate and torment him, and rob him of his peace, his comfort, and his reason, at pleasure. Every temptation seduces him to sin; trifling concerns involve him in serious conflicts.

It is a happy thing when the body is subject to the mind, and the mind deeply penetrated with an habitual sense of the authority of God. Let us give up ourselves to the Lord, and pray for the accomplishment of his promises, that he will

put his Spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his statutes.—(46.)

CHAPTER XXVI.

1. For honour to be given to those who are utterly unworthy, and unfit for it, is as out of season as snow in summer, and is as injurious as rain in harvest, which spoils the fruits of the earth, when they are ready to be gathered.

2. He that is cursed without cause, the curse shall do him no more harm than the bird that flies over his head.

3. The whip and the bridle are needful for the proper management of the horse and the ass: every creature must be dealt with according to its nature, but the nature of careless and profligate sinners, is that they will never be ruled by reason and persuasion, therefore severe treatment must be their portion. Man indeed is born like the wild ass's colt; but as some, by the grace of God, are changed, and become rational, so others, by custom in sin, are hardened.

3. Asses in the east are much more lively and active than among us, and need correction less than most of their horses.

4, 5. We should consider the character and purpose of the man we attempt to refute, adapt our remarks to the man, and address them to his conscience as may best end the debate at once. A decided and pointed answer to captious queries is the best way of dealing with scoffers. So that we should not answer a foolish man in a foolish manner, but in a way suited to expose his folly, and to prevent others from being deluded by him. Of this we have many beautiful examples in the life of Christ. While we follow after him, that is Wisdom, we shall need his counsels.

6—9. To quicken us to the diligent use of all means for the getting of wisdom, Solomon here shows that fools are not fit to be intrusted with any business, nor to have any honour put upon them. It is as if a man should throw a precious stone into a heap of common stones; nay, it is dangerous, it is like a stone bound in a sling, with which a man will be likely to do hurt. Wise sayings, as a foolish man delivers and applies them, lose their excellency and usefulness. If a man who lives a wicked life, yet speaks religiously, and takes God's covenant into his mouth, he does but shame himself and his profession; his going is unequal and un-

seemly. A drunken man will heedlessly wound himself and not be sensible of it, till he become sober and the wound becomes painful; so does a parable in the mouth of a fool, though he may not be sensible of it at present, he shall be when condemned by his own doctrine.

8. Or, "Putteth a precious stone in a heap of stones," probably alluding to passengers throwing a stone to the heap under which a criminal was buried.

10. Our translation gives this verse a different reading in the text, and in the margin. It may either declare how the Lord, the Creator of all men, will deal with sinners according to the degrees and aggravations of their guilt; or, how the great and powerful among men should disgrace and punish the wicked, according to their deserts.

11. The dog is a loathsome emblem of those sinners who return to their vices, after they have in various ways smarted for them, and have been made conscious of their folly in them. The apostle applies this proverb to those that have known the way of righteousness, but are turned from it, 2 Pet. 2. 22.

12. We see many a one, wise in his own conceit; who has some little sense, but is proud of it, thinks it much more than it is, more than any of his neighbours have, and enough, so that he needs no more; all the use he makes of his knowledge, is, that it puffs him up. Or, it describes the character of those who, making some show of religion, conclude their spiritual state to be good, when really it is very bad. This disease is in a manner desperate. Therefore he that seems to himself to be wise, must become a fool, that he may be wise, 1 Cor. 3. 18.

13. The slothful man dreads the way, the streets, the place where work is to be done, and a journey to be gone; he hates business, hates every thing that requires care and labour. When he is pressed to be diligent in his worldly affairs, this is his excuse, There is a lion in the way, some difficulty or danger he cannot grapple with. It is foolish to frighten ourselves from real duties by fancied difficulties.

This may be applied to a man slothful in the duties of religion; the ways and streets may denote the places where good men walk, and find pleasure and profit. The streets are the places where wisdom cries, or Christ is preached, ch. 1. 20, where

he is sought for and found, but many are the excuses men make not to attend them. They are vain and frivolous, for in these ways may be seen the feet of the messengers of peace; the joyful sound of salvation by Christ may be heard; the Lamb of God is directed to as taking away the sins of men. In some ages there have been violent persecutors, comparable to lions, in the way to terrify saints from their duty, but none of these could move them from it, nor separate truly gracious souls from their love to Christ.—(27.)

14. Having seen the slothful man in fear of his work, here we find him in love with his ease. The sluggard is one that does not care to get out of his bed, but seems to be hung upon it, as the door upon the hinges. Bodily ease, too much consulted, is the sad occasion of many a spiritual disease. They that love sleep will prove in the end to have loved death.

He does not care to get forward with his business, in that he stirs to and fro a little, but he is only where he was. Slothful professors turn, in profession, like the door upon the hinges. The world and the flesh are the hinges on which they are hung, and though they move in a course of external services, yet they get no good, they get no ground, they are never the nearer heaven.

15. The sluggard is now, with much ado, got out of his bed, but he might have lain there for any thing he is likely to bring to pass in his work. It is common for those that will not do their duty, to pretend they cannot. He himself is the loser by it, for he starves himself. Those that are slothful in religion, will not be at the pains to feed their own souls with the word of God, the bread of life, nor to fetch in promised blessings by prayer, though they might have them for the fetching.

16. He that takes pains in religion, can render a good reason for it; he knows that he is working for a good Master, and that his labour shall not be in vain. But let seven such persuade the sluggard to be diligent, so wretchedly besotted is he, that he takes slothfulness to be wisdom.

17. If we can be instrumental to make peace between those that are at variance, we must do it, though we should thereby get ill-will from both sides; but to make ourselves busy in other men's matters, and parties in other men's quarrels, is not only to court our own trouble, but to thrust ourselves into temptation.

18, 19. Those that make no scruple of deceiving their neighbours, are as madmen that cast firebrands, arrows, and death; so much hurt may they do by their deceits. They value themselves upon it as cunning men, but really there is not a greater madness in the world than a wilful sin. He that sins in jest, must repent in earnest, or his sin will be his ruin. If men would consider that a lie comes from the devil, and brings to hell-fire, surely that would spoil the sport.

20—22. Contention heats the spirit, burns up all that is good, and puts families and societies into a flame. Here we are told how that fire is commonly kindled and kept burning. We must not give ear to tale-bearers. Whisperers and backbiters are incendiaries not to be suffered. The words of a tale-bearer are deep and dangerous wounds, perhaps incurable.

23. A wicked heart disguising itself with the professions of love and friendship, is like a potsherd covered with the scum or dross of silver, with which one that is weak may be imposed upon, as if it were of some value.

24—26. Remember always to distrust when a man speaks fair; be not too forward to believe him, unless you know him well. Satan is an enemy that hates us, and yet in his temptations speaks fair, as he did to Eve, but it is madness to give credit to him.

27. What pains men take to do mischief to others! it is digging a pit, it is rolling a stone, hard work; and yet men will not stick at it, to gratify their passion and revenge. They hereby make preparation of mischief to themselves.

28. There are two sorts of lies equally detestable. A slandering lie, which avowedly hates those it is spoken of: the mischief of this every body sees. A flattering lie, which secretly works ruin. Men betray themselves by being credulous of their own praises, and the compliments that are passed upon them. A wise man therefore will be more afraid of a flatterer than of a slanderer.

CHAPTER XXVII.

1. In this uncertain world we know not what a day may bring forth. This does not forbid preparing for to-morrow, but presuming upon to-morrow. We must not promise ourselves the continuance of our lives and comforts till to-morrow, but speak of it with submission to the will of

God. We must not put off the great work of conversion, that one thing needful, till to-morrow, but to-day, while it is called to-day, hear God's voice.

2. Our light must shine before men, and we must do good works, though not on purpose that they may be seen. There may be a just occasion for us to vindicate ourselves, but not to applaud ourselves.

3, 4. Those who have no command of their passions, sink under the load. Rooted malice, which is much worse than the former, and desire of revenge for some injury or affront, are yet more mischievous.

5, 6. Plain and faithful rebukes are better effects of friendship than the excessive tenderness which connives at a man's faults for fear of offending him; and reproving our friends for what they say and do amiss, is really better, not only than secret hatred, as Lev. 19. 17, but than love, which does not show itself in good fruit,—which compliments them in their sins, to the prejudice of their souls.

7. The poor have in some respects the advantage of the rich. They have a better relish of their enjoyments, and they are often more thankful for them. In like manner the proud and self-sufficient disdain the provisions of the gospel; but the poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, find comfort from the word of God, and from the meanest book or sermon that testifies of Christ.

8. Every man seems to have his proper place in society, where he may be safe and comfortable; but when, out of levity, discontent, pride, or other like motives, he rashly quits it, he generally changes imaginary for real disquietude. An unsettled, dissatisfied spirit, a turn for scheming and shifting from one place and undertaking to another, aversion to our own place or business, are dangerous and sinful.

9, 10. The counsel of a true friend is more refreshing to a man in trouble, than any ointment or perfume to his senses. It is wisdom therefore to cultivate the friendship of those who have shown themselves attached to us by inclination. We are here advised not to expect relief from a kinsman, merely for kindred's sake, but to apply ourselves to our neighbours, who are at hand, and will help at an exigence. It is wisdom to oblige them, and we shall have the benefit of it in distress.

There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and he tells us to place entire confidence in him. And if we

must not forsake our own and our father's friend, shall we forsake our own God, the God of our pious fathers, who is infinitely the best of friends?—(46.)

11. An affectionate parent urges his son that his prudent conduct should gladden his heart, and furnish an answer to those who reproached him with neglecting his duties. But Wisdom also is justified of her children: the good conduct of christians is the best answer to those that reproach the gospel.

12. Where there is temptation, it is easy to foresee that if we thrust ourselves into it, there will be sin, and there will follow the evil of punishment. It will be well or ill with us, according as we do, or do not improve the foresight we have of evil before us. We do well for ourselves, when we provide for hereafter: see 22. 3.

13. See 20. 16. An honest man may be made a beggar, but he is not honest that makes himself one.

14. It is our duty to give every one due praise; but to be always doing this savours of hypocrisy. We must not make haste to praise men, so some understand it; but let them first be proved. It is greater folly to be fond of being ourselves extravagantly praised; it is a temptation to pride. Men think of themselves above what is meet, when others speak of them so.

15, 16. The contentions of a neighbour may be like a sharp shower, troublesome for the time; the contentions of a wife are like constant rain. It is a grievance that there is no concealing. A wise man would hide it if he could; but he cannot, any more than the noise of the wind when it blows, or the scent of a strong perfume.

17. Good men's graces are sharpened by converse with those that are good, and bad men's lusts and passions are sharpened by converse with those that are bad, as iron is sharpened by iron. This recommends to us a caution to take heed whom we choose to converse with, because the influence upon us is so great. And it directs us what we must have in view in conversation—to improve both others and ourselves, not to pass away time, or banter one another, but to make one another wiser and better.

18. Though a calling be laborious and despicable, yet those who keep to it, will find there is something to be got by it. God is a Master who has engaged to put honour on those who serve him faithfully.

19. Let a man examine his conscience, his thoughts, affections, and intentions. Let him behold his natural face in the glass of the Divine law, Jam. 1. 23, and he may discern what kind of man he is. There is a similitude between one man's heart and another's. One corrupt heart is like another, and so is one sanctified heart; the former bears the same image of the earthly, the latter the same image of the heavenly. Let us carefully watch our own hearts, comparing them with the word of God, and the state of the world around us, being thankful if the Lord hath made us to differ by his grace.

20. Two things are here said to be insatiable, and they are two things near of kin, death and sin. Death is insatiable; the first death, the second death, both are so. Sin is insatiable. The appetites of the carnal mind toward profit or pleasure are never satisfied. Those whose eyes are ever toward the Lord, are satisfied in him, and shall for ever be so.

21. Silver and gold are tried by putting them into the furnace and fining-pot; so is a man tried by praising him. If a man by praise is made more thankful to God, more respectful, more watchful, more diligent, that he may answer the expectations of his friends, by this it will appear that he is a wise and good man.

22. Some are so incorrigibly bad, that even severe methods do not answer the end; they are often under the rod, yet not humbled; in the furnace, yet not refined; but, like Ahaz, trespass yet more, 2 Chron. 28. 22: what remains then, but that they should be rejected as reprobate silver? The new-creating power of God's grace alone is able to produce a change.

23. Bruising or pounding to death in a large mortar is a punishment in the east; or it may be a metaphor taken from pounding metallic ores in mortars.

23—27. Here is a command given us to be diligent; it is directed to husbandmen and shepherds, but it extends to all other lawful callings. This command intimates, 1. That we ought to have some business to do in this world, and not to live in idleness. 2. We ought rightly and fully to understand our business, and not meddle with that which we do not understand. 3. We ought to look to it ourselves, and not turn over all the care of it to others. 4. We must be diligent and take pains; not only sit down and contrive, but be up and doing. As rea-

sons to enforce this command consider, 1. The uncertainty of worldly wealth, ver. 24. 2. The bounty of the God of nature, and his providence, ver. 25. Opportunities are to be observed and improved. 3. The advantage of diligence, ver. 26, 27.

Solomon tells us, in this place, that the perishing nature of earthly things is a reason for bestowing only a moderate and lawful share of attention upon our temporal interests. Let us do what we can, the world cannot be secured to us, and therefore we must choose a more durable portion; but by the blessing of God upon our honest labours, we may in most cases expect to enjoy a competence of earthly blessings.—(46.)

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. Sin makes men cowards. The righteous are bold as a lion; in the greatest dangers they have a God of almighty power to trust to; whatever difficulties they meet with in the way of their duty, they are not daunted by them.

2. National sins bring national disorders, and the disturbances of the public repose. For the transgression of a land, for profaneness, or immorality, many are the princes at the same time pretending to sovereignty. Or many, successively, in a little time, one cutting off another, as 1 Kings 16. 8, &c., or soon cut off by the hand of God, or of a foreign enemy, as 2 Kings 24. 5, &c.

3. The oppression of the extravagant, who have reduced themselves to poverty, and who possess authority, resembles an inundation, which entirely desolates a country. If indigent persons obtain opportunities of oppressing, their extortion will be more absolute than that of the more wealthy.

4. Wicked people speak well of one another, and so strengthen one another's hand in their wicked ways. Those that make conscience of the law of God themselves, will vigorously oppose sin, will reprove works of darkness, and do what they can to bring offenders to punishment.

5. As the prevalency of men's lusts is owing to the darkness of their understandings, so the darkness of their understandings is very much owing to the dominion of their lusts; they understand not the law of God as the rule either of their duty or of their doom. If a man seeks the Lord, it is a good sign that he

understands much, and it is a good means of understanding more, even of all things needful. The Lord will give them the Spirit of wisdom.

6. A man may be poor in this world, which is a temptation to dishonesty, and yet may resist the temptation. An honest, godly, poor man, is better than a wicked, ungodly, rich man; has more comfort in himself, is a greater blessing to the world, is worthy of more honour and respect.

7. Religion is true wisdom, and it makes men wise in every relation. Bad company is a great hinderance to religion. Companions of riotous men not only grieve their parents, but shame them.

8. That which is ill got, though it may increase much, will not last long. Sometimes God in his providence so orders it, that what one got unjustly, another uses charitably. Thus the poor are repaid, and God is glorified.

9. The sinner, whose prayers God is angry at, is one who wilfully and obstinately refuses to obey God's commands.

10. Ungodly men are often very zealous to entice those that profess religion into sin and error; but their success is their misery, and will ensure their own more aggravated condemnation.

11. Rich men are so much flattered, and are so much accustomed to have every thing their own way, that they are apt to think themselves superior to others in understanding as well as in wealth. Wise and pious men readily discern their true character.

12. There is great glory in the land when the righteous have their liberty, and the free exercise of their religion. But when wicked men rise to authority, good men seek safety in obscurity.

13. It is folly to indulge sin and excuse it, or throw the blame upon others. He that thus covers his sins, shall not obtain pardon, nor can he have any true peace of conscience. He who condemns himself, and humbly confesses his sins in true repentance and faith, shall find mercy from God.

Blessed be the Lord, our condition is not desperate, like that of the angels who kept not their first habitation. God looked upon our race with compassion, and provided us effectual relief. The Son of God is our great atonement, and we are invited to the enjoyment of pardon through faith in his blood. Under a deep sense of our guilt and danger, we are warranted to

claim salvation from that mercy which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.—(46.)

14. Most people think that those are happy who never fear; but there is a fear which is so far from having torment in it, that it has the greatest satisfaction. We ought not to fear the cross, or the rage of man; faith and love will deliver us from the fear of wrath and eternal misery; but we should always fear offending God, and fear dishonouring him; we should ever be watchful against sin and temptation. Happy is he that in these things feareth always. But he that sets God and his judgments at defiance, his presumption will be his ruin, and whatever sin, which is the greatest mischief, he falls into, it is owing to the hardness of his heart.

15. It is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people; but if he be a wicked ruler, that oppresses the people, whatever we may call him, this scripture calls him a roaring lion, and a ranging bear, in respect of his character, and the mischief he does to his subjects.

16. It is as much the interest as the duty of princes to reign in righteousness; oppressors therefore, and tyrants, want understanding; they do not consult their own honour, ease, and safety.

17. The murderer, though he flies for his life, shall be continually haunted with terrors. They that acquit him, or help him off, share the guilt of blood.

Or, none shall desire to save him from deserved punishment, none shall pity him.—(54.)

18. Those who are honest are always safe. Integrity and uprightness will preserve men, will give them a holy security in the worst of times. The false and dishonest are never safe. The perverse shall fall suddenly, without previous notice; he is least safe when most secure.

19. Those who are diligent in their callings, take the way to live comfortably. Is not Christ the Bread of God? and is he the Bread of life to our souls? O for grace to feed upon him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving!—(37.)

20. The true way to be happy is to be holy and honest. We are cautioned against a false and deceitful way to happiness; and that is, right or wrong, raising an estate suddenly.

21. Judgment is perverted when any consideration is admitted but pure, right.

Those that have once broken through the bonds of equity, though, at first, it must be some great bribe that would bias them, yet they will at length be so sordid, that for a piece of bread they will give judgment against their consciences.

22. He that hastens to be rich envies every one that has more than himself, covets whatever he sees, and grudges the most necessary expense or the smallest alms; he never seriously thinks how quickly God may take from him his wealth, and leave him in poverty.—(10.)

23. We are so prone to self-love and pride, that the most needful rebukes create displeasure. Yet upon reflection most will have a better opinion of a faithful reprover than of a soothing flatterer.

24. Christ shows the wickedness of those children who think it no duty, in some cases, to maintain their parents, Matt. 15. 5. Solomon here shows the wickedness of those who think it no sin to rob their parents, either by force or secretly, by wheedling them or threatening them, or by wasting what they have, and running into debt, and leaving them to pay. They add ingratitude to disobedience and injustice.

25. Those make themselves continually uneasy, that are haughty and quarrelsome. Those make themselves always easy, that live in a continual dependence upon God and his grace. He who commits his cause to God has abundant satisfaction, and thus his soul dwells at ease. None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those who live by faith.

26. A fool trusts to his own heart, to his own wisdom and counsels, his own strength and sufficiency, his own merit and righteousness. He that does so, is a fool, for he trusts to that, not only which is deceitful above all things, Jer. 17. 9, but which has often deceived him.

27. A selfish man not only will not look out for objects of compassion, but will look off from those that force themselves on his attention. Such persons expose themselves to the ill wishes of great numbers, and bring themselves under the curse of God in every thing.

28. When power is put into the hands of the wicked, wise men decline public business. When bad men are displaced, and their power taken from them, then that which is good revives.

If the reader will go diligently over this and the other chapters connected

with it, in many places where at first he may suppose there is least of Christ, he will find somewhat leading to him. Who are the poor here spoken of but the poor in spirit who are rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom? And who is the wise son but he that looketh to Christ the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth?—(37.)

CHAPTER XXIX.

1. The obstinacy of many wicked people is to be greatly lamented. The issue of this obstinacy is to be greatly dreaded. Hell is remediless destruction; they shall be destroyed, and no healing, so the word is. If God wounds, who can heal? The word of God warns us all to flee from the wrath to come to the hope set before us in Jesus Christ.

2. The people will have cause to rejoice, or mourn, according as their rulers are righteous, or wicked; if wickedness abound, religious people will be persecuted, and the ends of government perverted.

3. A virtuous young man rejoices his parents, and has the satisfaction of being a comfort to them. Nothing will beggar men sooner than licentiousness, the best preservative from ruinous lusts is wisdom.

4. A nation is happy under a good government. It is miserable under a bad one.

The Lord Jesus Christ is pointed out through all the scriptures as the King whose government is in righteousness, and who will minister true judgment to the people.—(37.)

5. Flatterers often aim to inveigle men by deceitful proposals which would entangle them in many difficulties. But if they have no such intentions, they put men off their guard, which tends to betray them into foolish conduct.

6. Transgression often involves in vexations. Righteous men walk at liberty, walk in safety, and therefore they sing and rejoice; it is their own fault if they do not rejoice evermore.

7. This may have special reference to the conduct of magistrates, but it is equally applicable to compassion to the distresses of the poor, and the unfeeling disregard often shown by the wicked.

8. Those are scornful men that mock at things sacred and serious; such men bring God's judgments upon a land, and bring all to confusion. Men who promote religion, which is true wisdom, turn

away the wrath of God, and prevent the mischievous consequences of divisions.

9. If a wise man dispute with a conceited wrangler, he will only be treated with anger or ridicule, in return for his most conclusive arguments. Whether the wise man himself be severe or pleasant with him, no good is done.

10. All the seed of the old serpent, who was a murderer from the beginning, inherit his enmity against the Seed of the woman; they seek the ruin of good men, because they condemn the wicked world, and witness against it, Christ told his disciples that they should be hated of all men. The just, whom the blood-thirsty men hate, seek their souls, pray for their conversion, and would gladly do any thing for their salvation.

11. He is a fool who tells every thing he knows, and can keep no counsel; who, when provoked, will say any thing, whoever is reflected upon by it.

12. When the prince hearkens to false accusations, there are none of his servants, however faithful, but are in danger of being held as guilty. One who loves flatterers, and is inclined to hearken to calumnies, causes his servants to become liars and false accusers.—(16.)

13. Some are poor, others are rich, have a great deal of deceitful riches as they are called, and they are creditors, or usurers, as it is in the margin. They meet together in the business of this world, and the Lord causes his sun to shine upon both, and gives them both the comforts of this life. To some of both sorts he gives his grace. He enlightens the eyes of the poor, by giving them patience, and of the deceitful, by giving them repentance, as Zaccheus. He bears with them though they can scarcely endure each other.

14. The rich will look to themselves, but the poor and needy the prince must defend and plead for. This will secure to him the favour of God, and strengthen his interest in his people.

15. Parents, in educating their children, must consider the benefit of due correction, the mischief of undue indulgence.

16. Transgression grows more bold, more threatening, when there are many to keep it in countenance. The more sin there is, the nearer is the ruin threatened. Let not the righteous have their faith and hope shocked by the increase of sin and sinners, but let them wait with patience.

17. It is a pleasure to parents, which none know but those who are blessed with it, to see the happy fruit of the good education they have given their children, and to have a prospect of their well-doing for both worlds. In order to this, children must not be suffered to go without rebuke when they do amiss.

18. How bare does a place look without bibles and ministers, and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls! The people perish; they are destroyed for lack of knowledge, Hos. 4. 6. Happy are the people that have a settled, a successful ministry among them.

That gospel which holds forth Jesus in the glories of his person, and in the completeness of his salvation, which humbles the sinner and exalts the Saviour, which by laying the creature low makes the Saviour precious, which tends to promote holiness in the life and conversation by showing all our springs to be in him—these precious truths to keep the soul alive and prevent it from perishing—this is an open vision.—(37.)

19. Here is the description of an unprofitable, slothful, wicked servant; a slave that serves not from conscience, or love, but purely from fear. There are too many who grow heedless and indolent when spoken to with mildness, sullen and refractory when reproved with sharpness.

20. When a man is full of self-conceit and presumption, when he is rash and disputatious, even upon points in religion, without due reverence or reflection, there is more hope even of the ignorant and profligate than of him.

21. Good usage to a servant does not imply that indulgence which would ruin even a child. This is very applicable to the body, which is a servant to the soul; those that delicately bring up the body, that humour it, and are over tender of it, will find that it will forget its place, and become a son, a master, a perfect tyrant.

21. The Greek version is, "He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, certainly at length shall lament it."—*Holden*.

22. An angry, passionate, furious disposition, makes men provoking to one another, and provoking to God.

23. Christ said more than once, that those who exalt themselves shall be abased. Those who think to gain respect by lifting up themselves, on the contrary, expose themselves to contempt, and

provoke God. Those who humble themselves shall be exalted, and established.

24. The receiver is as bad as the thief; and, being joined with him in the commission of the sin, he cannot escape joining with him in the concealment of it. They hate their own souls, for they willfully do that which will be the inevitable destruction of them.

25. Many dare not profess what they believe to be true, nor seek truth where they think it may be found, nor to do their known duty, and forsake the vanities of the world. They are ashamed to own Christ now, and if they persist in this course, he will not own them in the day of judgment. But he that trusts in the Lord will be saved from this snare. Depending on God's mercy, grace, and providence, he will boldly keep his commands, and in so doing find happiness and a sure refuge.

26. The common course men take to advance and enrich themselves, is to seek the ruler's favour. But the wisest course is to look to God, and seek the favour of the Ruler of rulers; for every creature is that to us which God makes it to be.

27. There is a constant opposition between virtue and vice, as between light and darkness, fire and water, but this especially refers to the old enmity that has always been between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Gen. 3. 15. All that are sanctified, have a good will to the souls of all; but they hate the ways and practices of the impious toward God, and injurious toward men; they abhor the conduct, yet pity and pray for the persons of the wicked.

The just man abhors the sins of the wicked, shuns their company, and testifies by every right method against their iniquities. His abhorrence of them is part of his conformity to Christ, who exposed hypocrites and spoke with a voice of thunder against the wickedness of men, yet called all to repentance, and prayed for the wicked when they were crucifying him. Hatred to sin in ourselves and others is a necessary branch of the christian temper. If we are the friends of Christ, we shall be enemies to that which brought him to the cross.—(46.)

All that are unsanctified, have a like rooted antipathy to godliness and godly people. It is not only the wickedness of the wicked, that they hate those whom God loves, but it is their misery that they hate those whom they shall shortly

see in everlasting bliss and honour, and who shall have dominion over them in the morning, Ps. 49. 14.

The proverbs of Solomon are ended.—Salvation is by grace through faith, and this faith works by love, producing universal obedience to the law of our Creator and Redeemer. This law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, and is published with more minuteness in this Divinely inspired body of christian morality. Let us study it attentively, and pray that the Spirit of Jesus may enable us to understand and practise it.—(46.)

CHAPTER XXX.

1—6. Before Agur speaks concerning the Saviour, he speaks of himself as needing a Saviour, and as being nothing without him. He speaks of himself as wanting a righteousness, and having done foolishly, very foolishly. Every man is become brutish, Jer. 10. 14. But he that knows his own heart, knows much more evil of himself than of any other. Whatever high opinions others may have of us, it becomes us to have low thoughts of ourselves.

Conformably to the experience of Agur, it may always be observed that the more enlightened people are, the more they lament their ignorance; the more they pant after continual progress in heavenly knowledge; the more they pray for clearer, still clearer, manifestations of the incomprehensible God, and his transcendently rich grace in Christ Jesus.—(31.)

He speaks of himself as wanting a revelation to guide him in the ways of truth and wisdom. The natural man, the natural powers, perceive not, nay they receive not the things of the Spirit of God.

He aims to advance Christ, and the Father in him, ver. 4. God and his works are both incomparable and unsearchable. But there is evidently a prophetic intimation of Him who came down from heaven to be our Instructor and Saviour, and then ascended into heaven to be our Advocate. Christ, the Son of God, for it is the Son's name, as well as the Father's, that is here inquired after.

This verse contains a clear intimation of the first and second persons in the Trinity; it is a natural and unforced interpretation suitable to the context.—(36.)

The old testament saints expected the Messiah to be the Son of the Blessed, and

he is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father, but his name as yet secret. The great Redeemer, in the glories of his providence and grace, can neither be paralleled, nor found out to perfection, for who has ascended into heaven, and descended? Who besides him is perfectly acquainted with both worlds? He was in heaven in the Father's bosom, John 1. 1, 18, thence he descended to take our nature upon him; and never was there such condescension! In that nature he again ascended, Eph. 4. 9, to receive the promised glories of his exalted state; and who besides has done this? Rom. 10. 6, 7. The glories of the kingdom of his providence are likewise unsearchable and unparalleled. The same that reconciles heaven and earth, was Creator of both, and governs and disposes of all. If Christ had not interposed, the foundations of the earth had sunk under the load of the curse upon the ground, for man's sin. Who, and what is the mighty One that doeth all this? We cannot find out God, nor the Son of God, unto perfection. O the depth of that knowledge! May we then believe his testimony, embrace his invitations, plead his promises, observe his directions, and keep his commandments!

Agur assures us of the truth of the word of God, and recommends it to us. The words of men are to be heard and read with allowance, but there is not the least ground to suspect any deficiency in the word of God. It is sure, and therefore we must trust to it, and venture our souls upon it. It is sufficient, and therefore we must not add to it. This forbids the advancing any thing, not only in contradiction to the word of God, but in competition with it; though under the plausible pretence of explaining it, yet if it pretend to be of equal authority; it is adding to his words, which opens the way to all manner of errors and corruptions.

1. Ithiel signifies God with me, the application of Immanuel, God with us. The word calls him God with us; faith appropriates this, and calls him "God with me, who loved me, and gave himself for me, and into union and communion with whom I am admitted." Ucal signifies the Mighty One, for it is upon one that is mighty that help is laid for us. Many interpreters therefore apply this to the Messiah. It is what Agur spake concerning Ithiel, even concerning Ithiel and Ucal. The mighty God, Isa. 9. 6, with us, Isa. 7. 14.—*Henry.* Agur signifies a collector or gatherer. Some have thought it applied to his making this collection of proverbs, but it appears to be a proper name, though nothing is known concerning the person indicated thereby.

7—9. Agur desired two things. The one relates directly to spiritual blessings, deliverance from guilt and sin, from idolatry, error, delusion, and temptation; from having the vanities of this world for a portion. The other relates to temporal things, yet is subservient to heavenly. He prayed against poverty and riches, not because of the hardships of the one and the incumbrances of the other, but because of the temptations to which both would expose him. Agur therefore wisely prayed for a middle state, that he might be kept at a distance from these temptations; he asked food convenient for him, daily bread suited to his station, his family, his real good. There is a remarkable similarity between this prayer and several clauses of the Lord's prayer.

If we are far removed from vanity and lies; if we are interested in the pardoning love of Christ, and have him for our portion; if we are preserved from delusions and overwhelming temptations, if we walk with God, and can commit our souls into his hands, and have an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, then we shall have all we can ask or think, as to spiritual things.

It does not become us to be so explicit as to temporal things, but if we suppose one situation to be more exempt from temptation than another, we may pray for it. We may look for grace sufficient to resist the powerful temptations of poverty; but when we consider the deceitfulness of our hearts, and what it is to suffer want, we may well pray to be kept from transgressions which might lead from smaller to greater degrees of guilt. Agur dreads one sin, because it would draw on another, for the way of sin is down-hill. And when we consider how they who have abundance are prone to abuse the gift, Agur's prayer will ever be found a wise one, though seldom offered. But how contrary is this to the eagerness of men to obtain riches! From this we must infer that the wisdom of the world, and the wisdom of God directly oppose each other, and that there is but little Divine wisdom even among professing christians.

It is enough if we have a competence, and what that is must be determined by a sober judgment, regulated by the bible, not by the fashions and opinions of the world. Food convenient; that which is so for one, may not be so for another, nor for the same person at different times;

but we may confidently hope that God, our good Father, will supply all our need, and not suffer us to want any thing which he sees good for us; and why should we wish for more?—(7.)

8. Food convenient—or bread of his statute; that which the Lord had appointed and ordained for him.—*Perkins*.

10. Slander not a servant to his master, accuse him not in trivial matters to make mischief. Thou wouldst injure his character wrongfully, and excite him to sin.

11—14. The several sorts of men here mentioned are called generations, because they are found through successive ages. In every age there are monsters of ingratitude, who, instead of praying for their parents, wish them dead, or otherwise ill treat them. Many persuade themselves that they are holy persons, whose hearts are full of iniquity, and practise secret wickedness. There are others whose haughtiness and arrogance are conspicuous. There have also been in every age rapacious and cruel extortioners who are monsters, and worse than savage beasts.

15—17. Agur had spoken of those that devoured the poor; here he speaks of their insatiableness in doing this. Cruelty and covetousness; those are two daughters of the horseleach, that still cry, "Give, give." Thus, while from these two principles they devour the poor, they are continually uneasy to themselves.

He specifies four things which are insatiable, to which those devourers are compared, which say not, It is enough; or, It is wealth. Those are never rich, that are always coveting. So insatiable are the corrupt desires of sinners, and so little satisfaction have they even in the gratification of them. He adds a terrible threatening to disobedient children, ver. 17. Many who have come to an ignominious end, have owned that the wicked courses that brought them to it, began in a contempt of their parents' authority.

14—16. These verses form an admirably finished picture of merciless and avaricious tyrants; "They are like the horse leech which hath two daughters, crying, Give, give: they are like three things that, &c."—*Holden*.

17. Birds of prey that attack the bodies of many of the disobedient who have come to an untimely end, or have been placed on a gibbet for their crimes.

18—20. Agur gives an account of four things that are unsearchable, and cannot be fully known. The three first are comparisons for the illustration of the last.

We cannot trace an eagle in the air, or a ship in the midst of the sea. The kingdom of nature is full of wonders; marvelous things which the God of nature does, past finding out. The fourth is a mystery of iniquity; it belongs to the depths of Satan, that deceitfulness and that desperate wickedness of the heart, which none can know, Jer. 17. 9. It is twofold:—the cursed arts by which a vile seducer insinuates himself into the affections of young women; and the arts which a vile adulteress uses to conceal her wickedness.

21—23. He gives an account of four sorts of persons that are very troublesome to the places where they live, and the relations and companies they are in. Men of low origin and base spirit, who, obtaining authority, become tyrannical. Foolish and violent men indulging in excesses, disturb all around. A woman of a contentious spirit and vicious habits causing trouble in her husband's family. A servant who has obtained undue influence and disquiets by her insolence and rapacity. Let those therefore whom Providence has advanced to honour from mean beginnings, carefully watch against that sin which will most easily beset them.

24—28. Agur, having specified four things, that seem great, and yet are really contemptible, here specifies four things that are little, and yet very admirable; in which he teaches us to admire the wisdom and power of the Creator in the smallest animals. Also to blame ourselves who do not act for our own real interests as the meanest creatures do for theirs. And not to despise the weak things of the world. There are those who are little upon the earth, poor in the world, and of small account, and yet are wise for their souls and another world, and those are exceedingly wise, wiser than their neighbours.

29—33. We may learn courage and fortitude in all virtuous actions from the lion, and not to turn away for any difficulty we meet with; from the grey-hound or horse we may learn quickness and despatch; from the he-goat, the care of our family, and those under our charge; and from a king, to have our children and those under us in subjection with all gravity; and from them all, to go well, and to order the steps of our conversation, so as that we may not only be safe, but comely, in going; also to keep our temper at all times, and under all provocations. We must bridle and suppress our own passion, and

take shame to ourselves, whenever justly charged with a fault. We must keep the evil thought we have conceived in our minds, from breaking out in evil speeches. We must not irritate the passions of others. Some are so provoking in their words and conduct, that they make those about them angry, who are not only not inclined to it, but resolved against it. Now this forcing of wrath brings forth strife, and where that is, there is confusion and every evil work. As in the churning of milk, and the wringing of the nose, that is done by force, which otherwise would not be done, so the spirit is heated by degrees with strong passions; one angry word begets another, and so it goes on, till it ends in irreconcilable feuds: let nothing therefore be said or done with violence, but every thing with softness and calmness.

Alas, how often have we done foolishly in rising up against the Lord our King! Let us then lay our hands upon our mouths, and humble ourselves before him. Having found peace with Him, let us follow peace with all men. As in the common concerns of life, means are requisite to produce desirable effects; so no spiritual blessings can be obtained by those who neglect the appointed means, nor are they ever sincerely used in vain. If men will waste their time in those books, diversions, and vanities which harden the heart and stifle the conscience, surely the end will be answered, and the wrath of God will be the dreadful consequence.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1—9. *An exhortation to king Lemuel to take heed of the sins he would be tempted to, and to do the duties he was called to.*

The word Lemuel signifies, For, or Belonging to the Lord. Some think that Solomon was meant; others suppose that Lemuel was some neighbouring prince, whose mother was a pious Israelite. It is the duty of mothers, as well as fathers, to teach their children. When they are under the mother's eye, she has an opportunity of fashioning their minds well. Those who are grown up should often call to mind the good instructions they received when children.

She cautions him against those two destroying sins of licentiousness and drunkenness, which, if he allowed himself in them, would certainly be his ruin. The many awful instances of promising cha-

acters that have been ruined by vicious women and the love of wine, should warn every one to avoid all approaches to these evils.

She counsels him to do good, ver. 6. Thou hast wine and strong drink at command; instead of doing thyself hurt with it, do others good with it; let them have it that need it. The scope of the place is to show that wine is a cordial, therefore to be used for want or medicine, and not for indulgence, 1 Tim. 5. 23. Every creature of God is good, and wine though wretchedly abused has its use, but instead of wasting it, it should be dispensed to those who need thereby to be refreshed and relieved. By the same rule, commendation and consolatory topics should be used as cordials to the dejected and tempted, and not administered to the confident and self-sufficient. Kings and magistrates should be more scrupulously temperate even than other men, and should be the counsellors and protectors of those who are oppressed, unable, or afraid to plead their own cause.

Our blessed Lord who allows and requires us to bestow cordials on those who are ready to faint, refused them in his own severest sufferings, Mark 15. 23, he did not decline the bitterest dregs of the cup of sorrow put into his hands, but when his people are made partakers of his sufferings, he puts the cup of consolation into their hands, calls them to drink of generous wine, and causes those to rejoice who are in the deepest distress. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us," said one that was pressed with affliction above measure, "so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ," 2 Cor. 1. 5.—(46.)

Ver. 10—31. *The description of a virtuous woman, as a wife, and the mistress of a family.*

This description of a virtuous woman forms a kind of poem, consisting of twenty-two verses, each of which begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The character is drawn with reference to the usages of those days, but the general outlines are equally suitable to every age and nation. The inquiry with which it begins, implies both the scarceness of such characters, and the happiness of him that had found one.

"A virtuous woman is a woman of strength," so the word is; made strong by wisdom and grace, and the fear of God: it is the same word that is used in the character of good judges, Exod. 18. 21.

A particular description of her, and of her excellent qualifications is given.

1. She is very industrious to recommend herself to her husband's esteem and affection; to know his mind, that she may accommodate herself to it, and she is willing that he rule over her. She conducts herself so that he may repose an entire confidence in her. She is a good wife, one who can be trusted, and he a good husband, that will leave it to such a wife to manage for him. She manages his affairs so that he is in no temptation to prey upon his neighbours. He is so happy in her, that he envies not those who have most of the wealth of this world! She makes it her constant business to do him good, and is afraid of doing any thing, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice, ver. 12. She adds to his reputation in the world, ver. 23. Her husband is known to have a good wife.

2. She is one that takes pains in her duties, and takes pleasure in them. This part of her character is much enlarged upon. She hates to sit still and do nothing. She is careful to fill up time, that none of that be lost. She rises early. The virtuous woman loves her business better than her ease or her pleasure, is in care to be found in the way of her duty every hour of the day. Those who have a family to take care of, should not love their beds too well in a morning. She applies herself to the business that is proper for her. Not in scholars', statesmen's, or husbandmen's business, but women's business. The spindle and the distaff are here mentioned as her honour, while the ornaments of the daughters of Zion are reckoned to their reproach, Isa. 3. 18, &c. She does what she does with all her power, and trifles not, ver. 17.

3. She is one that makes what she does turn to a good account, by prudent management. Though she have ever so much mind to any thing, she will not buy it, till she has first considered it. Many have undone themselves by buying without considering. Men should not lay out any thing upon superfluities, till, by the blessing of God upon their industry, they can afford it. She furnishes her house well, and has good clothing for herself and her family. She makes more than she and her household have occasion for; and therefore she sells to the merchants. She lays up for hereafter.

Those that take pains when, in their prime, will have the pleasure and joy of it when they are old.

4. She takes care of her family, and all the affairs of it, ver. 15. She looks well to the ways of her household, ver. 27, that she may check what is amiss and oblige all to do their duty to God and one another, as well as to her.

5. She is charitable to the poor, ver. 20. She is as intent upon giving as she is upon getting, and she does it freely, cheerfully, and liberally. She reaches forth to those at a distance, seeking opportunities to do good and communicate.

6. She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse, v. 26; you may perceive by every word she says, how much she governs herself by the rules of wisdom. She not only takes prudent measures herself, but gives prudent advice to others; and this with affection. The law of love and kindness is written in the heart, and shows itself in the tongue. In her tongue is the law of grace, or mercy; some understand it of the word and law of God, which she delights to talk of among her children and servants. She is full of pious discourse, which shows how full her heart is of another world, even when her hands are most busy about this world.

7. That which completes and crowns her character, is, that she fears the Lord, ver. 30. She is truly pious, and, in all she does, is guided and governed by principles of conscience. Beauty recommends none to God, nor is it any certain indication of wisdom and goodness, but it has deceived many a man who has made his choice of a wife by it. There may be a deformed soul lodged in a beautiful body; nay, many have been exposed by their beauty to temptations which have been the ruin of their virtue, their honour, and their precious souls. It is a fading thing at the best, therefore vain and deceitful; but the fear of God reigning in the heart, is the beauty of the soul; it lasts for ever, and bids defiance to death itself.

Observe her happiness, v. 25. She has firmness to bear up under the crosses and disappointments which even the wise and virtuous must expect to meet with. She shall reflect with comfort when she comes to be old, that she was not idle or useless when she was young. In the day of death, it will be a pleasure to her to think that she has lived to some good purpose. Nay, she shall rejoice in an eternity to

come. She is a great blessing to her relations, ver. 28. It is here shown that she shall be highly praised, ver. 29. The tree is known by its fruits, and therefore if the fruit be good, the tree must have our good word. But she leaves it to her own works to praise her. They that do that which is good, let them have praise of the same. Of this honour that cometh from God, every one ought to be ambitious, and according to this standard we all ought to regulate our judgments. This description let all women daily study, who desire to be truly beloved and respected, and to occupy their stations in a useful and honourable manner.

This passage is to be applied individually, but is it not also applicable to the

church of God collectively, which is described as a bride and a virtuous spouse? Infinite is the mercy of God, who by his grace has formed from among sinful men a church of true believers, which, as the spouse of his Son, is made to answer this amiable and glorious description.—(10.)

10. The church of Christ seems here meant, nor is this a novel sense of the passage, but what is given by many ancient christian writers; as Ambrose, Bede, and others. Whoever compares ver. 28, 29, with Cant. 6. 8, 9, will easily see the agreement, and will be led to observe that Solomon wrote both, and had a view to the same person, the church of Christ, who is often represented by a woman, Isa. 54. 1, 5, 6; Gal. 4. 26; Rev. 12. 1.—*Gill*. That commentator applies every verse in the description to this view of the subject.

22. The word here rendered silk, rather means fine linen or cotton cloth.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

Contents of Proverbs, ch. 10. to ch. 29. classed under different heads, so as to present at one view the various texts which relate to the same subject.—*From Henry*.

- (1.) Of the comfort, or grief, parents have in their children, according as they are wise or foolish, godly or ungodly, ch. 10. 1; 15. 20; 17. 21, 25; 19. 13, 26; 23. 15, 16, 24, 25; 27. 11; 29. 3.
- (2.) Of the world's insufficiency, and religion's sufficiency, to make us happy, ch. 10. 2, 3; 11. 4; and the preference to be given to the gains of virtue, above those of this world, ch. 15. 16, 17; 16. 8, 16; 17. 1; 19. 1; 28. 6, 11.
- (3.) Of slothfulness and diligence, ch. 10. 4, 26; 12. 11, 24, 27; 13. 4, 23; 15. 19; 16. 26; 18. 9; 19. 15, 24; 20. 4, 13; 21. 5, 25, 26; 22. 13, 29; 24. 30—34; 26. 13—16; 27. 18, 23—27; 28. 19. Particularly the improving or neglecting opportunities, ch. 6. 6; 10. 5.
- (4.) The happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, ch. 10. 6, 9, 16, 24, 25, 27—30; 11. 3, 5—8, 18—21, 31; 12. 2, 3, 7, 13, 14, 21, 26, 28; 13. 6, 9, 14, 15, 21, 22, 25; 14. 11, 14, 19, 32; 15. 6, 8, 9, 24, 26, 29; 20. 7; 21. 12, 15, 16, 18, 21; 22. 12; 28. 10, 18; 29. 6.
- (5.) Of honour and dishonour, ch. 10. 7; 12. 8, 9; 18. 3; 26. 1; 27. 21. And of vain-glory, ch. 25. 14, 27; 27. 2.
- (6.) The wisdom of obedience, and folly of disobedience, ch. 10. 8, 17; 12. 1, 15; 13. 1, 13, 18; 15. 5, 10, 12, 31, 32; 19. 16; 28. 4, 7, 9.
- (7.) Of mischievousness and usefulness, ch. 10. 10, 23; 11. 9—11, 23, 27; 12. 5, 6, 12, 18, 20; 13. 2; 14. 22; 16. 29, 30; 17. 11; 21. 10; 24. 8; 26. 23, 27.
- (8.) The praise of wise and good discourse, and the hurt and shame of an ungoverned tongue, ch. 10. 11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 31, 32; 11. 30; 14. 3; 15. 2, 4, 7, 23, 28; 16. 20, 23, 24; 17. 7; 18. 4, 7, 20, 21; 20. 15; 21. 23; 23. 9; 24. 26; 25. 11.
- (9.) Of love and hatred, peaceableness and contention, ch. 10. 12; 15. 17; 17. 1, 9, 14, 19; 18. 6, 17—19; 20. 3; 25. 8; 26. 17, 21; 29. 9.
- (10.) Of the rich and poor, ch. 10. 15, 22; 11. 28; 13. 7, 8; 14. 20, 24; 18. 11, 23; 19. 1, 4, 7, 22; 22. 2, 7; 28. 6, 11; 29. 13.
- (11.) Of lying, fraud, and dissimulation, and of truth and sincerity, ch. 10. 18; 12. 17, 19, 22; 13. 5; 17. 4; 20. 14, 17; 26. 18, 19, 24—26, 28.
- (12.) Of slandering, ch. 10. 18; 16. 27; 25. 23.
- (13.) Of talkativeness and silence, ch. 10. 19; 11. 12; 12. 23; 13. 3; 17. 27, 28; 29. 11, 20.

- (14.) Of justice and injustice, ch. 11. 1; 13. 16; 16. 8, 11; 17. 15, 26; 18. 5; 20. 10, 23; 22. 28; 23. 10, 11; 29. 24.
- (15.) Of pride and humility, ch. 11. 2; 13. 10; 15. 25, 33; 16. 5, 18, 19; 18. 12; 21. 4; 25. 6, 7; 28. 25; 29. 23.
- (16.) Of despising and respecting others, ch. 11. 12; 14. 21.
- (17.) Of tale-bearing, ch. 11. 13; 16. 28; 18. 8; 20. 19; 26. 20, 22.
- (18.) Of rashness and deliberation, ch. 11. 14; 15. 22; 18. 13; 19. 2; 20. 5, 18; 21. 29; 22. 3; 25. 8—10.
- (19.) Of suretiship, ch. 11. 15; 17. 18; 20. 16; 22. 26, 27; 27. 13.
- (20.) Of good and bad women, or wives, ch. 11. 16, 22; 12. 4; 14. 1; 18. 22; 19. 13, 14; 21. 9, 19; 25. 24; 27. 15, 16.
- (21.) Of mercifulness and unmercifulness, ch. 11. 17; 12. 10; 14. 21; 19. 17; 21. 13.
- (22.) Of charity to the poor, and uncharitableness, ch. 11. 24—26; 14. 31; 17. 5; 22. 9, 16, 22, 23; 28. 27; 29. 7.
- (23.) Of covetousness and contentment, ch. 11. 29; 15. 16, 17, 27; 23. 4, 5.
- (24.) Of anger and meekness, ch. 12. 16; 14. 17, 29; 15. 1, 18; 16. 32; 17. 12, 26; 19. 11, 19; 22. 24, 25; 25. 15, 28; 26. 21; 29. 22.
- (25.) Of melancholy and cheerfulness, ch. 12. 25; 14. 10, 13; 15. 13, 15; 17. 22; 18. 14; 25. 20, 25.
- (26.) Of hope and expectation, ch. 13. 12, 19.
- (27.) Of prudence and foolishness, ch. 13. 16; 14. 8, 18, 33; 15. 14, 21; 16. 21, 22; 17. 24; 18. 2, 15; 24. 3—7, 27; 26. 6—11; 28. 5.
- (28.) Of treachery and fidelity, ch. 13. 17; 25. 13, 19.
- (29.) Of good and bad company, ch. 13. 20; 14. 7; 28. 7; 29. 3.
- (30.) Of the education of children, ch. 13. 24; 19. 18; 20. 11; 22. 6, 15; 23. 12—14; 29. 15, 17.
- (31.) Of the fear of the Lord, ch. 14. 2, 26, 27; 15. 16, 33; 16. 6; 19. 23; 22. 4; 23. 17, 18.
- (32.) Of true and false witness-bearing, ch. 14. 5, 25; 19. 5, 9, 28; 21. 28; 24. 28; 25. 18.
- (33.) Of scorners, ch. 14. 6, 9; 21. 24; 22. 10; 24. 9; 29. 8.
- (34.) Of credulity and caution, ch. 14. 15, 16; 27. 12.
- (35.) Of kings and their subjects, ch. 14. 28, 34, 35; 16. 10, 12—15; 19. 6, 12; 20. 2, 8, 26, 28; 22. 11; 24. 23—25; 25. 2—5; 28. 2, 3, 15, 16; 29. 4, 12, 14, 26.
- (36.) Of envy, especially envying sinners, ch. 14. 30; 23. 17, 18; 24. 1, 2, 19, 20; 27. 4.
- (37.) Of God's omniscience, and his universal providence, ch. 15. 3, 11; 16. 1, 4, 9, 33; 17. 3; 19. 21; 20. 12, 24; 21. 1, 30, 31; 29. 26.
- (38.) Of a good and ill name, ch. 15. 30; 22. 1.
- (39.) Of men's good opinion of themselves, ch. 14. 12; 16. 2, 25; 20. 6; 21. 2; 26. 12; 28. 26.
- (40.) Of devotion toward God, and dependence on him, ch. 16. 3; 18. 10; 23. 26; 27. 1; 28. 25; 29. 25.
- (41.) Of the happiness of God's favour, ch. 16. 7; 29. 26.
- (42.) Excitements to get wisdom, ch. 16. 16; 18. 1; 19. 8, 20; 22. 17—21; 23. 15, 16, 22—25; 24. 13, 14; 27. 11.
- (43.) Cautions against temptations, ch. 16. 17; 19. 27.
- (44.) Of old age and youth, ch. 16. 31; 17. 6; 20. 29.
- (45.) Of servants, ch. 17. 2; 19. 10; 29. 19, 21.
- (46.) Of bribery, ch. 17. 8, 23; 18. 16; 21. 14; 28. 21.
- (47.) Of reproof and correction, ch. 17. 10; 19. 25, 29; 20. 30; 21. 11; 25. 12; 26. 3; 27. 5, 6, 22; 28. 23; 29. 1.
- (48.) Of ingratitude, ch. 17. 13.
- (49.) Of friendship, ch. 17. 17; 18. 24; 27. 9, 10, 14, 17.
- (50.) Of sensual pleasures, ch. 21. 17; 23. 1—3, 6—8, 19—21; 27. 7.
- (51.) Of drunkenness, ch. 20. 1; 23. 29—35.
- (52.) Of the universal corruption of nature, ch. 20. 9.
- (53.) Of flattery, ch. 20. 19; 26. 28; 28. 23; 29. 5.
- (54.) Of undutiful children, ch. 20. 20; 28. 24.
- (55.) Of the short continuance of what is ill-gotten, ch. 20. 21; 21. 6, 7; 22. 8; 28. 8.
- (56.) Of revenge, ch. 20. 22; 24. 17, 18, 29.
- (57.) Of sacrilege, ch. 20. 25.
- (58.) Of conscience, ch. 20. 27; 27. 19.
- (59.) Of the preference of moral duties before ceremonial, ch. 15. 8; 21. 3, 27.
- (60.) Of prodigality and wastefulness, ch. 21. 20.
- (61.) The triumphs of wisdom and godliness, ch. 21. 22; 24. 15, 16.

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| (62.) Of frowardness and tractableness, ch. 22. 5. | (71.) Of cowardliness and courage, ch. 28. 1. |
| (63.) Of uncleanness, ch. 22. 14; 23. 27, 28. | (72.) The people's interest in the character of their rulers, ch. 28. 12, 28; 29. 2, 16; 11. 10, 11. |
| (64.) Of fainting in affliction, ch. 24. 10. | (73.) The benefit of repentance and holy fear, ch. 28. 13, 14. |
| (65.) Of helping the distressed, ch. 24. 11, 12. | (74.) The punishment of murder, ch. 28. 17. |
| (66.) Of loyalty to the government, ch. 24. 21, 22. | (75.) Of hastening to berich, ch. 28. 20, 22. |
| (67.) Of forgiving enemies, ch. 25. 21, 22. | (76.) The enmity of the wicked against the godly, ch. 29. 10, 27. |
| (68.) Of causeless curses, ch. 26. 2. | (77.) The necessity of the means of grace, ch. 29. 18. |
| (69.) Of answering fools, ch. 26. 4, 5. | |
| (70.) Of unsettledness and unsatisfiedness, ch. 27. 8, 20. | |

These maxims have the Divine authority, and are infallible rules to direct our conduct in every circumstance of human life. They agree with the manners of every age, and are adapted to every period, condition, and rank in life. Kings and subjects, rich and poor, wise and foolish, old and young, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, masters and servants, may here learn their respective duties, and read lessons of instruction for the regulation of their conduct in their various circumstances.—(30.)

ECCLESIASTES.

The name of this book is taken from the Greek version; it signifies "The Preacher," and the Hebrew name is similar. The wisdom of God here preaches to us, speaking by Solomon, who it is evident was the author. This illustrious prince, endued with all knowledge, was left to turn aside from God, and to ransack all earthly good in pursuit of happiness. At the close of his life, being made sensible of his sin and folly, he recorded here his experience for the instruction and benefit of others, as the book of his repentance. He had fully made trial, and he pronounced all earthly good to be "vanity and vexation of spirit." There are indeed things in this book which are dark, and hard to be understood; but there is enough easy and plain to convince us of the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make us happy; of the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make us miserable; and of the solid satisfaction to be had in doing our duty both to God and man. The moral philosophers disputed much about man's happiness, or chief good, but Solomon, in this book, determines the question, and assures us, that to fear God and to keep his commandments, is the whole of man. It shows us that no created good can satisfy the soul, and that happiness is to be found in God alone. The scope of the whole argument is the praise and recommendation of true wisdom, as the supreme good to creatures responsible for their actions. Keeping this steadily in view, the whole admits of an easy and natural interpretation. In prosecuting his inquiry into the chief good, Solomon has divided this work into two parts. The first, which extends to ch. 6. 9. demonstrates the vanity of all earthly conditions, occupations, and pleasures; the second part, which includes the remainder of the book, sets forth the praises of wisdom, and describes its nature, excellence, and beneficial effects. Thus the great design intended from the use of it to the church, appears to be, to teach the emptiness and vanity of all things here below, to satisfy the desires of immortal souls. Nothing could have been more happily chosen than the example of the wisest and greatest of the kings of the earth, to set forth this important truth. No one ever had such advantages for proving these truths, and he here, as a penitent, wise, and faithful preacher, gives us the conclusions drawn from his own experience. And as the conviction of this doctrine must, under the blessed Spirit's teaching, be made instrumental to lead the heart to Christ, we discover in this book a gracious method to make men wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

TABLE OF CONTENTS. PART I.

Sec.

1. The vanity of all earthly things, ch. 1. 2.
2. The unprofitableness of human labour, and the transitoriness of human life, ch. 1. 3—11.
3. The vanity of laborious inquiries into the ways and works of man, ch. 1. 12—18.
4. Luxury and pleasure are only vanity and vexation of spirit, ch. 2. 1—11.
5. The wise excel fools, yet as death happens to both, human learning is vanity, ch. 2. 12—17.
6. The vanity of human labour, in leaving it they know not to whom, ch. 2. 18—23.
7. The emptiness of sensual enjoyments, ch. 2. 24—26.
8. Though there is a proper time for the execution of all human purposes, yet are they useless and vain; the Divine counsels, however, are immutable, ch. 3. 1—14.
9. The vanity of human pursuits proved from the wickedness prevailing in courts of justice, contrasted with the righteous judgment of God, ch. 3. 15—17.
10. Though life, considered in itself, is vanity, for men die as well as beasts, yet, in the end, it will be very different with the spirit of man, and that of beasts, ch. 3. 18—22.
11. Vanity is increased unto men by oppression, ch. 4. 1—3.
12. The vanity of prosperity, ch. 4. 4.

Sec.

13. The vanity of folly, or of preferring the world to true wisdom, ch. 4. 5, 6.
14. The vanity of covetousness, ch. 4. 7, 8.
15. Though society has its advantages, yet dominion and empire are but vanity, ch. 4. 9—16.
16. Errors in the performance of Divine worship, which render it vain and unprofitable, ch. 5. 1—7.
17. The vanity of murmuring at injustice; for though the oppression of the poor and the perversion of judgment greatly prevail, they do not escape the notice of the Almighty, ch. 5. 8, 9.
18. The vanity of riches; with an admonition as to the moderate enjoyment of them, ch. 5. 10—20.
19. The vanity of avarice, ch. 6. 1—9.

PART II.

20. Since all human designs, labours, and enjoyments are vain, it is natural to inquire, What is good for man? What is his supreme good? ch. 6. 10—12. The answer is in the remainder of this book.
21. The praise of character and reputation, ch. 7. 1.
22. Affliction improves the heart, and exalts the character of the wise, ch. 7. 2—10.
23. The excellence of wisdom, ch. 7. 11—14.
24. An objection, with the answer, ch. 7. 15—8. 7.
25. The evil of wickedness shows the advantage of true wisdom, ch. 8. 8—13.
26. An objection, with the answer, ch. 8. 14—9. 1.
27. An objection, with the answer, ch. 9. 2—10. 17.
28. The banefulness of sloth, ch. 10. 18.
29. The power of wealth, ch. 10. 19.
30. An exhortation against speaking evil of dignities, ch. 10. 20.
31. Exhortation to charity and benevolence, ch. 11.
32. An exhortation to the early cultivation of religious habits, ch. 12. 1—7.
33. The conclusion, ch. 12. 8—14.—(5. 33. 36. 37. *Henry. Scott.*)

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1—3. *Solomon, the preacher, shows that all human things are vain.*

This book presents us with a comfortable and cheering view of the latter days of the life of Solomon. Judging from the historical books alone, we should have been left to conclude that he had fallen finally. Much, however, is to be learned from the comparison of one part of scripture with another. We here behold him, after a temporary apostasy from the Lord God of Israel, confessing and forsaking evil, and finding mercy. We behold him returning from the broken and empty cisterns of the world, to the Fountain of living water; recording for the admonition of future ages his own folly and shame, the bitterness of his disappointment, and the salutary lessons he had learned from seeking happiness in the vanities of the world without God.—(65.)

Solomon here calls himself the preacher, which bespeaks his present character. He is "Koheleth," which comes from a word which signifies, to gather. He is one gathered; that had rambled and gone astray like a lost sheep, but was gathered in from his wanderings. Divine grace can renew even those to repentance, who, after they had known the way of righteousness, turned aside from it, and can heal their backslidings, though it is a rare case. It is only the penitent soul that God will accept; and it is only the gathered soul, that is the penitent soul, that

comes back from its by-paths. If professors of religion fall into gross sin, they are concerned openly to testify their repentance.

Or, he is one gathering. Being himself gathered to the congregation of saints, out of which he had by his sin thrown himself, he endeavours to gather others that had gone astray like him, and perhaps were led astray by his example. He that has done any thing to seduce his brother, ought to do all he can to restore him. They that have taken warning themselves to turn and live, should give warning to others not to go on and die.

The abrupt proposal of his subject shows how full Solomon's heart was. He does not say all things are vain, but that they are vanity. VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY.

This is the text of the preacher's sermon; the leading proposition which it is his object to illustrate and establish in the whole of this book; of which he never loses sight; which meets us in the way of direct allusion at every step and turn of the progress of his argument; and to which he reverts in the very same terms at the close.—(65.)

As God created them, all things were good; but as apostate man puts them out of place, and expects from them what is not in them, they vanish in disappointment. None are so well qualified to preach the vanity of worldly things as those who have given them a full trial, and have renounced them all for the comforts of true

religion. If this world, in its present state, were all, it would not be worth living for; but what shall we say when, for the sake of shadows, eternal happiness is forfeited, and eternal misery deserved?

The wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had ever so much, are not sufficient to make us happy. A man's life consists not in abundance, Luke 12. 15. As goods are increased, care is increased; and a little will imbitter all the comfort; and then what profit has a man of all his labour? As to the soul, and the life to come, we may more truly say, What profit has a man of all his labour? All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires, will not atone for the sin of the soul, nor cure its diseases, nor countervail the loss of it; what profit will they be of to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state? The fruit of our labour in heavenly things is meat that endures to eternal life; but the fruit of our labour for the world is only meat that perishes.

Ver. 4—8. *The constant changes of all things—Man's toil, and want of satisfaction.*

The earth, its productions and affairs, abide much the same through successive ages, but its inhabitants are continually changing. All things are mutable and subject to continual toil, still moving, and never resting; man himself, after all his labour, is no nearer finding rest than the sun, the wind, or the current of the river. The swift approach of death sufficiently proves the vanity of a portion in this world, and teaches him to spend his span of life in doing the will of his Creator, and in serving his generation. His soul will find no rest, if he have not sought it in and from God. The eye, though wearied and worn out with seeing, and the ear with hearing, are not satisfied; every thing satiates the senses, and yet leaves them dissatisfied and craving.

Ver. 9—11. *There is nothing new—Former things are forgotten.*

The new inventions and discoveries that men boast of are unreal, or of small consequence. And there is nothing yet discovered which can prevent the world from being the same vain, vexatious place as in former ages.

Though many things, in one point of view, may be called new, yet they have been produced by the same causes, and regulated by the same laws, which have existed from the creation. Or, rather,

the observation means that there are no new sources of human enjoyment, every plan for the attainment of happiness being equally ineffectual with all former things, to secure the happiness of man.—(36.)

In the kingdom of Providence, though it does not go always in the same track, yet, in the general, it is still the same thing over and over again; men's hearts, and the corruptions of them, are still the same; their desires, and pursuits, and complaints, still the same; and what God does in his dealings with men, is according to the scripture, so that it is all repetition. The affairs and miseries of human life have always been much the same.

Now this shows the folly of the children of men, in affecting things that are new, and in pleasing and priding themselves in them. It should take us off from expecting happiness and satisfaction in the creature, and quicken us to secure spiritual and eternal blessings.

How many former things and persons were there, which in their day were thought very great, and yet there is no remembrance of them! Here and there one person or action that was remarkable, met with a historian, when there were many others, no less remarkable, that were dropt; and therefore we may conclude, that neither shall there be any remembrance of things to come, but that which we hope to be remembered by, will most probably be either lost or slighted.

Ver. 12—18. *Solomon's pursuit of wisdom, and the vexation he found therein.*

Solomon, having asserted that all is vanity, and having given general proofs, now evinces the truth of it by his own experience; he tried all things, and found them vanity. He gives a statement of particulars, and begins with the most likely to be the happiness of a reasonable creature, that is, knowledge and learning.

He tells us what trial he had made of it, with such advantages, that if true satisfaction could have been found in it, he had found it. He applied himself to the improvement of these advantages, which, though ever so great, will not make a man wise, unless he give his mind to it. He set himself not only to seek, but to search into that which requires the closest application of mind. Where God gives great advantages of getting knowledge, he expects improvements accordingly.

He tells us what was the result of this trial, to confirm what he had said, that all

is vanity. He found that his searches after knowledge were very toilsome, a weariness not only to the flesh, but to the mind, ver. 13. He found that the more he saw of the works done under the sun, the more he saw of their vanity; and the sight often occasioned him vexation of spirit, ver. 14. He found that when he had got some knowledge, he could neither gain that satisfaction to himself, nor do that good to others he expected, ver. 15. It would not redress the many grievances of human life. All the philosophy and politics in the world will not restore the corrupt nature of man to its primitive rectitude; we find the insufficiency of them, both in others and in ourselves. All our enjoyments here, when we have done our utmost to bring them to perfection, are still defective. The more we know, the more we see of our own ignorance.

Even the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom made distressing discoveries of man's wickedness and misery, so that the more he knew the more he saw cause to lament and mourn. Let us then learn to hate and fear sin, the cause of all this vanity and misery; to value Jesus Christ, by whom we may return to God and happiness; to despise and renounce this vain world; to seek our rest in the knowledge, love, and service of God our Saviour.

Let us not therefore be driven off from the pursuit of useful knowledge, but put on patience to break through the sorrow of it; yet let us expect true happiness only in the knowledge of God, and the careful discharge of our duty to him.

The secret of true happiness must consist in being submissive to all the arrangements of the supreme will. Such submission can only arise from the confidence of faith in the wisdom, faithfulness, and love of our heavenly Father, and the assurance of his universal and unceasing care of all the interests of his children. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose, Rom. 8. 28.—(65.)

15. That which is perverse is with difficulty corrected; and that which is defective is with difficulty supplied.—*Holden.*

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1—11. *The vanity and vexation of mirth, sensual pleasure, riches, and magnificence.*

Solomon having found learning, with all its discoveries, to be labour, sorrow,

and disappointment, proceeded to make trial of mirth and pleasure. But he soon found this also to be vanity. What does noisy, flashy mirth towards making a man happy? It is a mere affectation or hypocrisy in pleasure.

He possessed himself of every object that his eye or his heart desired, having it in his power to compass his wishes. While pursuing his schemes, he had a momentary pleasure in beholding them advance towards completion; but this was all. The manifold devices of men's hearts, in order to derive satisfaction from the world, and their incessant changing from one thing to another, resemble the restlessness of a man in a fever; they suppose their uneasiness to arise from their situation; though, in fact, it is seated in their distempered minds.

I thought to draw my flesh with wine, so the margin reads it, or to wine. Those that addict themselves to drinking, should remember to what miseries they thereby draw themselves.

Perceiving quickly that it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the most costly amusements of princes and great men. These are called the delights of the sons of men; for the gratifications of sense are the things which the generality of people set their affections upon. The delights of the children of God are of quite another nature, pure, spiritual, and heavenly, and the delights of angels. Yet Solomon enjoyed, more than any other man did, rational and sensitive pleasures at the same time; nor was there any thing, either in the circumstances of his condition, or in the temper of his spirit, to sour or embitter his pleasures. He was as happy as the world could make him.

The poor, when they read such a description as these verses contain, are ready to feel discontent at their own condition. But the antidote to all such feelings is here before us, in the estimate formed of it all by the owner himself. All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and the same experiment would yield the same result to us as it did to Solomon, and has done to many more. We brought nothing into this world, and can carry nothing out. Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. Compare the description of Solomon's splendour with that of the city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.—(65.)

His wisdom remained with him. Not

indeed that true wisdom in which he began his reign, a mind regulated in all its ample powers by the fear of the Lord, but a penetrating and capacious understanding, with vast and varied acquirements in human science, and the speculative knowledge of the theology of Israel. His reputation for wisdom continued to equal his fame for riches and power.—(65.)

We have the judgment he deliberately gave of all this. When the Creator had made his great works, he reviewed them, and, behold, all was very good; but when Solomon reviewed all the works that his hands had wrought, with the utmost cost and care, to make himself easy and happy, nothing answered his expectation.

Yet notwithstanding Solomon's experience, every age tries the experiment again, and at last joins in his conclusion. But let us remember that these things cannot quiet a guilty conscience, comfort a drooping spirit, ease a dying body, or save an immortal soul.—(4.)

Every earthly pleasure, when unconnected with better blessings, must leave a void. It palls upon the appetite for happiness, and leaves it as eager and unsatisfied as before. It is not in the nature of earthly things to be a portion to the human mind. The principle of happiness must be carried about within us; or though we betake ourselves from one employment to another, and thence to another, we shall fail of satisfaction in every trial. Happiness arises not from the situation in which we are placed. It is only through Jesus Christ that final glory and blessedness can be attained.—(65.)

4—6. The vast works, buildings, and riches of Solomon are described, 1 Kings 7. 1—12; 9. 15—19; 10. 14—27.

8. Solomon is supposed here to allude to the females of his court. Unless he is understood to do so, we have no reference to what was primarily the cause of his declension from the true religion, and which he confesses, ch. 7. 28, proved as unsatisfactory as his other pursuits after pleasure.

Ver. 12—17. *Human wisdom insufficient, though far preferable to folly.*

Upon a deliberate survey, Solomon found that knowledge and prudence were indeed preferable to ignorance and folly. Wisdom enlightens the soul, but sensuality clouds and eclipses the mind, and is as darkness to it. Though wisdom and knowledge will not make a man happy—St. Paul shows a more excellent way than gifts, and that is grace—it is best to have them, in respect of our present safety, comfort, and usefulness. Yet he

maintains that, in respect of lasting happiness and satisfaction, the wisdom of this world gives very little advantage; for, as to the troubles and anxieties of this life, as to pain, sickness, and death, no wisdom or learning can ward them off.

It is promised to the righteous, that they shall be had in everlasting remembrance; but there is no such promise made concerning the wisdom of this world. Between the death of a godly and a wicked man there is great difference, but not between the death of a wise man and a fool; to both the grave is a land of forgetfulness; a new generation rises, that knew them not.

The most learned of men, who dies a stranger to Christ Jesus, will perish equally with the most ignorant; and the imaginary advantage of being honoured after death is as uncertain as it is vain. And what is this bubble which so many covet, and which so few obtain? What good can commendations on earth do to the body in the grave, or the soul in hell? And the spirits of just men made perfect cannot want them. So that if this were all, we might be tempted to hate our life, with all our fruitless toil and work, as it is all vanity and vexation of spirit.

The expression, One event happeneth to them all, refers not merely to the life of all coming to the same end, but to the administration of Divine Providence in temporal things, and its similarity towards good and bad: see ch. 9.—(65.)

Ver. 18—26. *The things of this world to be used according to the will of God.*

There is business which is perpetual blessedness. We shall have no reason to hate that labour; but it is labour under the sun, labour for the meat that perishes; John 6. 27; Isa. 55. 2, which Solomon here speaks of with so little satisfaction.

This speaks a natural hatred of worldly things, weariness rising from a sense of disappointment in them. Our hearts are very loth to quit their expectations of great things from the creature; but he came to that at length.

Solomon seems to have perceived that Rehoboam was not likely to inherit his wisdom, or to preserve his prosperity. Having bestowed great pains to establish the affairs of his kingdom by wisdom, his successor, who entered upon all his labour without any pains of his own, might destroy all by his neglect and imprudence. This he saw was a great evil in the affairs of men, which could not be rectified.

The world is a vale of tears, even to those that have much of it. They that labour are said to be heavy laden, and are therefore called to come to Christ for rest, Matt. 11. 28. See what fools they are, that make themselves drudges to the world, and do not make God their Rest; night and day they must be uneasy, ver. 22.

So that, in fact, the world affords a man nothing better than a subsistence for the body, and the utmost he can attain in this respect is to allow himself a sober, cheerful use thereof, according as his rank and condition are; and not to lose that in pursuit of a good which is not to be had out of them. But we must enjoy good in our labour; we must use these things to make us diligent and cheerful in worldly business.

And even this is the gift of God. Riches are a blessing or a curse to a man, according as he has, or has not, a heart to make good use of them. Without dependence on Him, a man is deprived of this small measure of enjoyment; the animals share it to greater advantage; but rational souls require a better portion. Who had more advantages for this than Solomon had? yet he missed it when wandering from God and his duty. To those that are accepted of the Lord he giveth true wisdom, knowledge, and joy; a peaceful conscience, a contented mind, joyful hope, and solid satisfaction in the knowledge and love of him. But to the sinner he allots labour, sorrow, vanity, and vexation, in seeking a worldly portion, which yet afterwards comes into better hands. The vanity and vexation spoken of belong to men only as sinners, and is confirmed to them as unbelievers; so that the sum total of all the real enjoyment, even of this life, devolves to those that are good before God; who, having food and raiment, are therewith content, and use what God giveth to his glory, with thankful and cheerful hearts.

Let the sinner seriously contemplate his future prospects. Let him consider his latter end. To seek a lasting portion; an interest in the love of Christ and the blessings it bestows, is the only way to the true and satisfying enjoyment even of this present world.—(65.)

25. More than I, or "Without Him." X

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1—10. *The mutability of human affairs.*

Solomon here proceeds to show that there is a season and a time for every one

of God's purposes to take place, and for us to perform our duties, and prepare for the future. To expect unchanging happiness in a changing world must ensure disappointment. To accommodate ourselves to our circumstances, forms our duty and wisdom in this world. And, however this state of things may appear to us, every one of these dispensations is beautiful in its season; God's whole plan for the government of the world will be found to be altogether wise, just, and good. Then let us seize the favourable opportunity for every good purpose and work. The time to die is fast approaching. If it had not been for sin, there would not have been a time for death; if it had not been for Christ, we must have died without hope. Our sins bring upon us all our calamities; to Christ we owe all our comforts and our hopes. Let us then receive present mercies with gratitude, bear transient afflictions with patience, and expect our happiness from an unchangeable God.

Labour and sorrow fill the world. This travail is given us, to make us weary of the world, and desirous of the remaining rest. It is given us, that we may always have something to do; none of us were sent into the world to be idle.

4—7. Dancing is put as a general expression for joy and gladness. Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing, Ps. 30. 11. A time to cast away stones and to gather stones together, seems to refer to the rearing of memorials of covenants between parties, and of remarkable events. Such were the pillars erected by Jacob, Gen. 28. 18; 31. 52. Also the heaps of stones over Achan and Absalom. There is a time when covenants are made, and when they are broken; when trophies of victory are raised and scattered; a time to cast away. Paul counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. A time to rend and a time to sew; this seems to be an allusion to rending the garments, as an expression of grief and sorrow. In these verses Solomon is not to be considered as speaking of what God approved, of times when these things might lawfully be done. He speaks of times when there is occasion for them if right, or of temptation to the doing of them if wrong.—*From Wardlaw.*

Ver. 11—15. *The Divine counsels unchangeable and unsearchable.*

God has made every thing beautiful in his time; therefore we must be reconciled to it. Every thing is as God has made it, not as it appears to us. Though we see not the complete beauty of Providence, yet we shall see it, a glorious sight it will be, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

He has set the world in their hearts. Some make this to be a reason why we

might know more of God's works than we do. God has not left himself without witness of his righteous, equal, and beautiful ordering of things, and this he has set in men's hearts; so that men might in most of them perceive an admirable order and contrivance. Others make them to be a reason why we do not know so much of God's works as we might. We have the world so much in our hearts, are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and are so exercised concerning them, that we have neither time nor spirit to see God's hand in them. The world has not only gained possession of the heart, but has formed prejudices there against the beauty of God's works.

In a variety of its objects of desire and pursuit, the world not only lawfully may, but necessarily must interest our hearts, and engage much of our attention. Its lawful and needful occupations are numerous; and although God has so set the world before men, he is not chargeable with the partialities and excesses of man's attachment to it, or their blinding and perverting influence.—(65.)

We mistake if we think we were born for ourselves; no, it is our business to do good. Observe, it is to do good in this life, which is short and uncertain; we have but little time to be doing good, therefore had need to redeem time.

Shun avaricious and distrustful anxiety. Diligence is a duty, and enjoyment is a privilege; but drudgery or bondage are incompatible with comfort. And why is a man a slave and a drudge? Has he not often prayed, Give us day by day our daily bread? Yes; but he must make haste to be rich. He must gain, not a subsistence, but a fortune. He must not continue in his calling with God, but retire from it, to live in a state of independence and idleness. Hence he has not a moment he can call his own. Hence he denies even rest to body and mind, and loses the best part of life in providing for the worst.—(42.)

Let us not disquiet ourselves about the appointments of God, being assured that he deals with all his creatures in every age by the same perfect, unerring rules. It behoves us therefore to say, Let it be as God wills, for how cross soever it may be to our designs and interests, God's will is his wisdom.

Not that we should merely submit from necessity, from a feeling that repining is

useless. There is a mighty difference between this state of mind and that resignation which springs from the pious assurance that all God's ways are wisdom, faithfulness, and love. Satisfaction with God's providence is having faith in him that all things work together for good to them that love him; resting upon him with humble simplicity of heart, as he is revealed in the gospel.—(65.)

God doeth all, that men should fear before him. God changes his disposals, and yet is unchangeable in his counsels, not to perplex us, much less to drive us to despair; but to teach us our duty to him, and engage us to the support and advancement of religion among men.

That which has been, is now. Things were always as mutable as they are now, and so they will be. The world, as it has been, is, and will be; for God requires that which is past, and deals with us no otherwise than as he has used to deal with good men. There has no change befallen us, nor any temptation by it taken us, but such as is common to men. And his dealings with individuals, and with collective bodies, from age to age, make the same display of his Divine perfections.

11. The word here rendered, "world," is translated differently elsewhere. *Holden* thus paraphrases the verse; "And I find that, although He hath made every thing beautiful in its season, and established the course of nature with transcendent wisdom, yet He hath also put obscurity in the midst of them, his works being intricate and mysterious, so that man, from the beginning to the end, cannot find out and perfectly comprehend the work that God doeth."—See *Parkhurst*.

15. "And yet God will require (that is, avenge) the persecuted man."—*Holden*.

Ver. 16—22. *The vanity of worldly power when abused by oppressors, whose condition is no better than that of brutes.*

Man in his best estate—upon the throne, where his authority is submitted to, upon the judgment-seat, where his wisdom and justice are appealed to—without the fear of God he is but vanity; for, set that aside, and the judge will not judge aright, will not use his power well.

But there is another Judge that stands before the door. And though the day of affliction may last long, yet there is a set time for the examination of every purpose, and every work done under the sun. With God there is a time for the redressing of grievances, and reversing of unjust decrees, though as yet we see it not here.

Solomon here seems to express the wish

of his heart, concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God would cause them to consider it; that they might perceive that by choosing this world as their portion they reduced themselves to a level with the beasts, without being exempted, as they are, from present vexations and a future account. He shows the vanity of this world's wealth and honours, by the equal condition in mere outward respects between men and beasts. For that which befalleth men as to mere animal pleasures or pains, befalleth also beasts. Both return to the dust from whence they were taken; in their expiring there is no visible difference, but death makes much the same change with a beast that it does with a man. What little reason then have we to be proud of our bodies, or bodily accomplishments, when they must be reduced to the earth, very shortly, in common with the beasts, and we must mingle our dust with theirs! As none can fully comprehend, so few consider properly the difference between the rational soul of man, which after the death of the body enters upon an eternal state of happiness or misery, and the spirit or life of the beast, which is extinct with the body, when it returns to the earth. The spirit of man goes upward, to be judged, and determined to an unchangeable state. It is as certain that the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth, it dies with the body, it perishes at death. From not attending to this, men expose themselves to eternal misery. This great difference there is between the spirits of men and beasts; and a good reason it is, why men should set their affections on things above, and lift up their souls to those things, not suffering them, as if they were the souls of brutes, to cleave to this earth.

Let us pray for our besotted fellow sinners, that the Lord would show them their real condition. Surely their case is indeed lamentable, the height of whose hopes and wishes is, that they may die like beasts.

Let our inquiry be, how an eternity of existence may be to us an eternity of enjoyment. To answer this, is the grand design of revelation. Jesus is revealed as the Son of God, the Divine Redeemer, the hope of sinners. Believe in Him, live to Him. Thus shall we possess true happiness. When our mortal frame shall descend to the dust, our spirits commended into the hands of God our Saviour, shall rise to the perfection of purity and

bliss. This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.—(65.)

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1-3. *The miseries that arise from oppression.*

Solomon here observes the oppressed, and shows the troubles of their condition. It grieved him to see might prevail against right, to see so much oppression under the sun;—to see how those that were wronged, laid to heart the wrongs that were done them; how unable they were to help themselves; and how they and their calamities were slighted.

Wherever we turn our eyes or our thoughts, we see melancholy proofs of the wickedness and misery of mankind; who, as if the evils of life and death were not enough, seem to employ all their ingenuity in creating trouble to themselves and to each other.

Being thus hardly used, they are tempted to hate and despise life, and to envy those that are dead and in their graves, and to wish they had never been born; and Solomon is ready to agree with them, for it serves to prove that all is vanity and vexation. The condition of the saints that are dead, and gone to rest with God, is, upon many accounts, better and more desirable than the condition of living saints that are yet in their work and warfare. But a good man, how calamitous a condition soever he is in while in this world, cannot have cause to wish he had never been born, since he is glorifying the Lord, even in the fires, and will be happy at last, for ever happy.

When we consider the future state of righteous retribution, we may say of ungodly men, it had been better for them they had never been born; and yet they have most cause to wish the continuance of life with all its vexations; as a far more miserable condition awaits them if they die in their sins.

Or this section amounts to this, that if human and worldly things were our chief good, not to exist, considering the various oppressions here below, would be preferable to life.—(36.)

Ver. 4-6. *Troubles which arise from envy.*

Solomon having considered the odious character of oppressors, and the miseries endured by their victims, next proceeds to notice the sources of disquietude peculiar to benefactors, and includes not only

benevolent characters, but all who labour with diligence, and whose efforts are crowned with success.—(65.)

They often become great and prosperous, but this excites envy and opposition, the effects of which more than counterbalance the temporal advantages of their pains. Others, seeing the vexation met with in an active course, foolishly expect more satisfaction in sloth and idleness.

The sluggard brings himself into such a poor condition, that he has nothing to eat but his own flesh, into such a desperate condition, that he is ready to eat his own flesh for vexation. Idleness is a sin that is its own punishment.

Verse 6 may be taken as the sluggard's argument for his idleness; he misapplies a good truth for his justification. But we may rather take it as Solomon's advice to keep the mean. Let us by honest industry lay hold on the handful, that we may not want necessities, but not grasp at both the hands full, which will only create us vexation of spirit. Moderate pains and moderate gains will do best. A man may have but a handful of the world, and may enjoy it and himself with a great deal of quietness, with content of mind, peace of conscience, and the love and good will of his neighbours, while many that have both their hands full, have more than heart could wish, have much travail and vexation with it.

4. "Every prosperous work."—Holden.

Ver. 7, 8. *The folly of covetousness.*

Here Solomon shows another instance of the vanity of this world, that frequently the more men have of it, the more they would have; and on this they are so intent, that they have no enjoyment of what they have. Selfishness is the cause of this evil; There is one alone, that minds none but himself, cares for nobody; there is not a second; none to take care of but himself, yet is there no end of his labour; he will scarcely allow necessary rest to himself, and those he employs. He does not confine himself to his own calling, but is for having a hand in any thing he can get by. He never thinks he has enough; His eye is not satisfied with riches. He has enough for his calling, for his family, for his living decently in the world, but he has not enough for his eyes; though he can but see it, can but count his money.

He denies himself the comfort of what he has. Others may bereave us of outward good, but cannot rob us of graces

and comforts; it is our own fault, if we do not enjoy ourselves; yet many are so set upon the world, that, in pursuit of it, they bereave their souls of good here and for ever; make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, bereave themselves, not only of the favour of God and eternal life, but of the pleasures of this present life.

He has no excuse for doing this; He has neither child nor brother, no second; none that are poor, or dear to him. He never puts this question, to himself, For whom do I labour thus? Do I labour, as I should, for the glory of God, and that I may have to give to those that need?

The distant relations or strangers who inherit such a man's wealth never thank him for it; they know he would not have left it if he could have kept it longer. This disease gathers strength by time and habit, and is capable of such excess as could not have been credited if not proved by facts. Men who have no child or brother, infirm through age, and tottering on the brink of the grave, grow more grasping and griping, and still scrape and toil without measure or ceasing.

Miser signifies wretched, and surely there is not on earth a more pitiable object than the man here described; the victim of one of the strangest aberrations of understanding; one of the most unaccountable contradictions to all right feeling, and to every right principle. And how often do we see men, and men professing the benevolent religion of Him who, "though he was rich, for our sakes became poor," anxiously scraping together with one hand and holding fast with the other, excusing themselves by commonplace observations on the necessity of care, and the danger of extravagance.—(65.)

Ver. 9—12. *The advantages of mutual assistance.*

From the folly and misery of the solitary miser, Solomon shows the advantages of friendship and marriage. Surely he has more satisfaction in life, who labours hard to maintain a family he loves, than the miser has in his toil; and faithful friendship produces some solace amidst the evils of life. This is illustrated in several instances. These are applicable both to the benefits of common friendship, and those of the communion of saints. In all things union tends to success and safety, but above all, the union of christians produces manifold advantages. They assist each other by encouragement, or friendly reproof. They warm each other's hearts

while they converse together of the love of Christ, or unite in singing his praises, while a solitary christian scarcely will be found lively or fervent in spirit. Then let brotherly love continue, and diffuse its Divine influence through all the visible church of Christ; let us endeavour to improve our opportunities of christian fellowship, and to turn them to good account. In these things all is *not* vanity, though there will be imperfection and alloy as long as we are under the sun. Two together are a threefold cord; where two are closely joined in holy love and fellowship, Christ will by his Spirit come to them, and make the third, as he joined himself to the two disciples going to Emmaus; then there is a threefold cord that can never be broken. They that dwell in love, dwell in God, and God in them.

Ver. 13—16. *The mutability of royalty.*

Rulers who should be most revered for authority and age, often are too proud to be admonished or counselled; thus they involve themselves and their people in great calamities. A poor child, who behaves prudently, is more respectable and happy than such characters: as he who from a dungeon by his wisdom is advanced to a throne, like Joseph, is preferable to him who though born to his kingdom is reduced to poverty by his folly. How honourable and happy are those who by faith in the Son of God, which is the true wisdom, are advanced from the bondage of sin and Satan, to the glorious kingdom that cannot be moved!

There is much obscurity in ver. 15, 16; probably they mean, that Solomon observed the general propensity of men to prefer the heir ("the second," or next to him, who is to stand up in his stead) to the reigning prince, however excellent. Probably he observed this in the case of Rehoboam with some uneasiness.

People are never long easy and satisfied; they are continually fond of changes. This is no new thing, but it has been the way of all that have been before them; there have been instances of this in every age. It cannot but be a great grief to princes, to see themselves slighted by those they have studied to oblige; there is no steadfastness in man; This is vanity and vexation of spirit.

But the willing servants of the Lord Jesus, our King, rejoice in him alone, from age to age, and they will love Him more and more to all eternity. May all

the living that walk under the sun, hear of, trust in, and obey him, henceforth and to the end of the world.

15. "All the living which walk under the sun, are with (that is, favour and support) the second child," &c.—*Holden.*

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1—3. *What renders devotions vain.*

Solomon here cautions against those things which render religious duties vain. Address thyself to the worship of God with a solemn pause, and take time to compose thyself for it, not going about it with precipitation, which is called, hasting with the feet, Prov. 19. 2. Keep thy thoughts from roving and wandering from the work; keep thy affections from running out toward wrong objects. We come in a right frame when we come with this upon our heart, Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. Superstitious, or self-devised worship, or formal services without a corresponding frame of mind, are the sacrifices of fools. We should therefore avoid rashness in our professions, petitions, and vows, we should avoid vain repetitions; copious prayers are not here condemned, but those that are unmeaning. We should use plain language, such as springs from the heart, not affected and studied. How often our wandering imaginations, our want of reverence, faith, love, gratitude, and spirituality, render our attendance on Divine ordinances little better than mere lip labour, or the sacrifice of fools!

As confused dreams are an evidence of a hurry of business which fills the head; so, many words and hasty ones, used in prayer, are an evidence of folly reigning in the heart, ignorance of, and unacquaintance with both God and ourselves, low thoughts of God, and careless thoughts of our own souls.

1. There probably is reference here to the custom of putting off shoes or sandals, on entering a temple, in token of reverence, as Exod. 3. 5; Josh. 5. 15. But, as Mede observes, the admonition intends not the outward ceremony only, but the whole act of sacred reverence.

Ver. 4—8. *Of vows, and concerning oppression.*

A man should perform his vows if lawful, however inconvenient they may be, and that without delay; it is much better to avoid making than to infringe them.

It is taken for granted that vows which it is a man's duty to fulfil, must be consistent with the obligations of the Divine

law. When any thing vowed was discovered to be contrary to the will of God, it required to be repented of. The inquiry ought to have been before, not after the making of it. When a person made engagements rashly, he suffered his mouth to cause his flesh to sin—his corrupt nature, by the evil principles of which men are tempted to elude the performance of their vows. By the angel, or messenger, as the word signifies, we are here to understand the priest, as Mal. 2. 7. The case supposes a man coming to the priest, and pretending that his vow was made rashly, and that it would be improper to fulfil it. Such mockery of God would excite the Divine displeasure, which might not only blast what he had thus unduly kept, but might come down upon and destroy all he had.—(65.)

As there are vanities in the multitude of dreams, so there are in the multitude of words. The remedy for all the evils against which the wise man directs his admonitions is contained in the last clause of ver. 7; But fear thou God. The reverential fear of the Most High, habitually influencing the mind and heart, will prevent a man from being rash with his mouth, especially from making inconsiderate vows, and afterwards seeking excuses for not fulfilling them. Vows have been a snare to the consciences of the weak, and when they do not produce a spirit of bondage and fear, are very apt to engender self-righteous confidence and presumption. It is our duty to beware of ensnaring our souls by self-invented and self-imposed obligations.—(65.)

We are to keep down the fear of man, ver. 8. Set God before thee, and then, if thou seest the oppression of the poor, thou wilt not marvel at the matter, nor find fault with Divine Providence; nor think the worse of the institution of magistracy, when thou seest the ends of it thus perverted; nor of religion, when thou seest it will not secure men from suffering wrong.

Though oppressors be secure, God takes notice of, and will reckon for all violent perverting of judgment; he regards, not only sees it, but observes it, and keeps it on record, to be called over again; his eyes are upon their ways.

Ver. 9—17. *The vanity of riches shown.*

The goodness of Providence is more equally distributed than appears to a superficial observer. The most plentiful productions of the earth are in reality the

most valuable. The king needs them, and the poor share them; they relish their morsel better than he does his luxuries. What our Saviour has said, Luke 12. 15, that a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses, Solomon here proves by divers arguments.

Natural desires are at rest when that which is desired is obtained, but corrupt desires are insatiable; nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. There are bodily desires which silver itself will not satisfy, much less will worldly abundance satisfy spiritual desires. The more men have, the more occasion they have for it, and the more they have to do with it; when goods increase, they are increased that eat them, ver. 11. The more men have, the better house they must keep, the more servants they must employ, the more guests they must entertain, the more they must give to the poor, and the more they will have hanging on them. Christ said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive; but to a covetous man, who thinks all lost, that goes beside himself, it is a constant vexation to see others eat of his increase.

The sleep of the labourer is sweet, not only because he has tired himself with his labour, but because he has little care to break his sleep. The sleep of the diligent christian, and his long sleep, is sweet; for, having spent himself and his time in the service of God, he can cheerfully return to God, and repose in him as his Rest. But those who have every thing else, often fail to secure a good night's sleep; both the abundance of their care, as that rich man's, who, when his ground brought forth plentifully, thought within himself, What shall I do? Luke 12. 17, and the abundance they eat and drink, which overcharges the heart, hinders repose.

Their riches do them hurt, make them proud, secure, and in love with the world, and draw away their hearts from God and duty. They do hurt with their riches, not only gratifying their own lusts, but oppressing others, and dealing hardly with them. Often they sustain hurt by their riches, both as to life and estate; riches often take away the life of the owners thereof. Riches are perishing things, and all our care about them cannot make them otherwise. How much soever men have when they die, they must leave it all behind them, ver. 15, 16. This is urged as a reason why we should be content with

such things as we have, 1 Tim. 6. 7. In respect of the body the dust shall return to the earth as it was; but sad is our case if the soul return as it came; for we were born in sin, and if we die in sin, unsanctified, we had better never have been born; that seems to be the case here spoken of.

What a sore evil it is for a rational creature to spend his life in incessant care and toil! to live in uneasiness all his life, and to end his days in sorrow and wrath, as well as sickness and dying pains. Men will see that they have laboured for the wind, when, at death, they find the profit of their labour is all gone, gone like the wind, they know not whither.

The last clause intimates how ill the covetous worldling can bear the calamities of human life. He does not sorrow to repentance, but he has sorrow and wrath, is angry at the providence of God, angry at his sickness, angry at all about him, which doubles his affliction, which a good man lessens and lightens by patience and joy in his sickness.

Ver. 18—20. *The right use of riches in the fear of God.*

Life is God's gift, and he has appointed us the number of the days of our life, Job 14. 5: let us therefore spend those days in serving the Lord our God with joyfulness and gladness of heart. We must not view our calling as a drudgery, but we must rejoice in our labour, not grasp at more business than we can go through without perplexity and disquiet, but take pleasure in the calling where God puts us.

The manner in which Solomon refers to God as the Giver, both of life and its enjoyments, shows us how they ought to be received, and how to be used—surely in a way consistent with his will and to his glory. The man who in his moments of dissolute revelry quotes Solomon in excuse for libertinism, as if he gave his sanction to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, either has not thought of his words at all, or has done so to pervert them.—(65.)

Let this passage recommend to all the kind and salutary admonition of the merciful Redeemer. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you; for him hath God the Father sealed." He himself is the Bread of life—Bread, of which whosoever eateth shall live for ever. And every man that would have the life

must eat of the bread. It is the only food of the soul. It is for high and low, rich and poor together. All are invited to partake of this heavenly provision.—(65.)

This is the way to make our lives easy, and relieve ourselves against the many toils and troubles which we are liable to, ver. 20. A cheerful spirit is a great blessing; it makes the yoke of our employments easy, and the burden of our afflictions light.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1—6. *The vanity of riches without power to enjoy them. Also of long life and flourishing families.*

Solomon here shows the evil of having, and not using; of gathering for emergencies to come, which may never take place, not to lay out on the most urgent present occasions.

It is often seen that a man has all he can want for outward enjoyment, and has no desire after more substantial good for his soul; yet the Lord leaves him so to his avarice or evil dispositions, that he makes no good or comfortable use of them. By one means or other they all come into the hands of strangers; this is vanity, and an evil disease. By sickness and bodily infirmities a man is deprived of all comfort from his wealth, and his attendants reap more advantage from his estate than he does; or rather, from suspicions and distastes which he imbibes respecting his relations, he attaches himself to strangers who devour his substance, to the injury of his family.

He enlarges, ver. 3—6, on the case of a man possessing, not only riches and honour, but to these are added a numerous family, a matter of fond desire and of high honour among the Hebrews; also long life, the desire of mankind in general. Even with these additions his soul is not filled with good; he has no capacity for enjoying his riches, family, and life; and he has no burial; no respect and honour in his death; no interment corresponding to his wealth, consequence, and station. He lives without enjoyment, and dies without honour. An untimely birth is better than he, for such a man cometh into the world with vanity, and in his passage through life seems, as far as he is concerned, to have been born to no purpose, for no end or use. He goes through the period of his earthly existence, a proof of the utter vanity of expect-

ing sure and solid happiness from the present world; and then departs in darkness, without the light either of comfort or honour; he is immediately forgotten; out of sight out of mind.—(65.)

If an untimely birth has had no enjoyment, neither has it had suffering, or but momentary. Its destiny is compared with the condition of a man who has been troubled through life, and is unlamented in death. This hath rest rather than the other. The rest of the grave is meant, where it is immediately laid, without having tasted the miseries of human life. It had been better for the unhappy man just described, thus to have been carried at once to the grave. Suppose the life of him who is surrounded with means of enjoyment which he cannot use, were prolonged to more than double the length of the longest life upon earth, yet if he sees no good, and then goes to one place, the grave, with the untimely birth, is not the latter better than he? He who has entered on life only for one moment, to quit it the next, has a preferable lot to him who has lived long, but only to suffer.—(65.)

2. To eat, is often put for enjoy, in scripture language.—Holden.

Ver. 7—10. *The little advantage any one has in outward things; the vanity of restless desires.*

The preacher here further shows the vanity and folly of heaping up worldly wealth, and expecting happiness in it. How much soever we toil about the world, we can have for ourselves no more than a maintenance; there is nothing for the head and heart, nothing to nourish or enrich the soul. A little will serve to sustain us comfortably, and a great deal can do no more. The appetite is not filled, natural desires are still returning, still pressing. Worldly sinful desires are insatiable. The desires of the soul find nothing in the wealth of the world to give them any satisfaction. The soul is not filled, so the word is. In this matter, the most learned has no advantage above the mere idiot. The poor man whose desires are not beyond his station, and who conducts himself prudently, has comfort as well as the richest, and is under no real disadvantage.

Better is the sight of the eyes, making the best of that which is present, than the wandering of the desire, the uneasy walking of the soul after things at a distance. We cannot say, Better is the sight of the eyes than the fixing of the desire upon

God, and the resting of the soul in him; it is better to live by faith in things to come, than to live by sense, which dwells only upon present things; but better is the sight of the eyes than the roving of the desire after the world, and the things of it, which are uncertain and unsatisfying at the best. If what is desired be obtained, it proves not what we promised ourselves from it, but commonly the wandering desire is crossed and disappointed, and then it turns to vexation of spirit. Our lot, whatever it is, is appointed us by the counsel of God, which cannot be altered, and it is therefore our wisdom cheerfully to acquiesce in it. We shall have what pleases God, and let that please us.

Whatever we attain to in this world, still we are but men, and the greatest possessions and preferments cannot set us above the common events of human life. How far soever our desires wander, and how closely soever our endeavours keep pace with them, we cannot strive with the Divine Providence, but must submit to the disposals of it. Man must not contend with him that is mightier than he; it is presumption to arraign God's proceedings, and to charge him with folly or iniquity.

10. The intention of the writer seems to be, to express the common frailty and vanity of the nature of man, as having been the same in all that have ever existed. The verse might be rendered, "For he who, (or, whosoever) hath been, his name is long since named; and it is known what he is—(even) man; (or, and it is known that he is man,) neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he."

Ver. 11, 12. *Emptiness of all created enjoyments.*

Seeing that the many things which men pursue on earth only form an increase of vanities, what is man the better for all his worldly devices and acquisitions? For who can so much as tell what is good for man, in this vain life which passeth as a shadow? Or, who can inform him of future events concerning him, or of what will take place after his death? Any attempt to inform a man of future events, which God hath kept secret from all living, should be treated as presumption. Where is he that can show unto man any substantial good in created things? Our life upon earth is to be reckoned by days; it is but a vain life, and we spend it as a shadow; so fleeting, uncertain, so transitory is it, and so little in it to be fond of, or to be depended on. If all the comforts of life be vanity, life itself can have no great reality in it, to constitute a happiness for

us. But in returning to God, trusting in his mercy through Jesus Christ, submitting to his will, we may find rest to our souls, and enjoy earnest of heavenly consolations. Soon shall we glide through this vexatious world, and find ourselves in that happy place, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1—6. *The benefit of a good name; of death above life, of sorrow and rebuke above vain mirth.*

Having represented the vanity of human life, and of its numerous and diversified pursuits, in a great variety of views, Solomon now proceeds to set before us the counsels of wisdom, for our guidance in this vain and transitory world. Some of these, like many sayings of our Divine Lord, stand in direct opposition to the common sentiments and practices of mankind. It need not be matter of surprise, that the thoughts and feelings of a fallen and depraved creature, whose heart is corrupt, and whose understanding is the dupe of its corruption, should be opposed to the directions and admonitions of Him who is infinitely holy.—(65.)

A reputation for piety and integrity is really more valuable and desirable than all the wealth and pleasure in this world, ver. 1. The day of death, which will remove to rest and eternal satisfaction, is better than the day of our birth, which brought us into a world of so much sin and trouble, vanity and vexation. It will do us more good to go to a funeral than to go to a feast, ver. 2. We may lawfully go to both, as there is occasion; our Saviour both feasted at the wedding of his friend in Cana, and wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany. But, considering how apt we are to be vain and secure, and indulgent of the flesh, it is better for us to go to the house of mourning, to learn, both from the dead, and from the mourners, that it is the end of man as to this world: all have sinned, and therefore death passes upon all; we must thus be left by our friends. They that are spiritually alive, will lay it to heart, and some perhaps will lay that to heart, and consider their latter end, who would not lay a good sermon to heart.

Seriousness is better for us than mirth and jollity, ver. 3. Sorrow is more agreeable to our present state, where we ourselves are daily sinning and suffering more or less, and daily seeing the sins and suffer-

ings of others. That is best for us which is best for our souls, by which the heart is made better, though it be displeasing to sense. It is wisdom for a man to go willingly to the house of mourning, and a proof of folly when nothing is delighted in but mirth and levity, ver. 4. It is much better for us to have our corruptions mortified by the rebuke of the wise, than to have them gratified by the song of fools, ver. 5. To hear, not only with patience, but with pleasure, the rebuke of the wise, is a sign and means of wisdom. The laughter of a fool is noisy and flashy, but is gone presently, and is not an instance of true joy. This is also vanity, it deceives men to their destruction, for the end of that mirth is heaviness. Sorrow is more suited to our state in this sinful suffering world, than vain, carnal joy. The Redeemer wept; but it is not recorded that he laughed, though he rejoiced in spirit.

Ver. 7—10. *Observations concerning oppression, anger, and discontent.*

Wicked men oppress those who are far better and wiser than themselves, injure some in temporal things, and tempt others to many sins for which they will be answerable, ver. 7. Considering the trials to which we may be exposed, let us earnestly pray that the grace of our Lord may be sufficient for us. The event of our trials and difficulties is often better than at first we could have imagined, ver. 8. Surely it is better to be patient in spirit, and willing to wait quietly, than to be proud and hasty.

Be not soon angry, nor quick in apprehending and resenting an affront: Be not long angry; though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, it passes through it as a way-faring man, it rests only in the bosom of fools; there it resides, there it has the innermost and uppermost place, and is not easily parted with, ver. 9. We must make the best of that which is, ver. 10. It is folly to cry out of the badness of our own times, when we have more reason to cry out of the badness of our own hearts—if men's hearts were better, the times would mend—and we have more reason to be thankful that they are not worse, but that even in these times we enjoy many mercies. It is folly to cry up the goodness of former times, so as to derogate from the mercy of God to us; as if former ages had not the same things to complain of that we have: this arises from fretfulness and discontent, and an aptness to quarrel with God himself. God has

been always good, and men always bad; and if, in some respects, the times are now worse than they have been, perhaps, in other respects, they are better.

Ver. 11—22. *Advantages of wisdom.*

Much is here said to engage us to get wisdom. An inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Wisdom is as good as an inheritance, yea better too, so the margin reads it; it is more our own, will make us greater blessings, and remain longer with us; and by it there is real profit to them that see the sun, both to those who have it, and to their contemporaries. It contributes much to our safety, and is a shelter to us from the storms of trouble, and its scorching heat; it is a shadow, so the word is, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Wealth will not lengthen out the natural life, true wisdom will give spiritual life. Wisdom strengthens the wise, and makes them bold and resolute, by keeping them always on sure grounds; it strengthens them for their services under their sufferings.

Here are precepts of wisdom. Consider the work of God, ver. 13. Let us look upon the disposal of our condition and all the circumstances of it as the work of God. Consider that every work of God is wise, just, and good, and all will appear, at last, to have been for the best. We must accommodate ourselves to the dispensations of Providence that respect us, and do the work and duty of the day in its day, ver. 14. Observe, God has intermingled prosperity and adversity in the lot of man on earth, that he may still feel his dependence upon him, and seek all his happiness from him, without being lifted up in prosperity, or sinking in trouble.

We must not be offended at the greatest prosperity of wicked people, nor at the saddest calamities that may befall the godly in this life, ver. 15. Wisdom will teach us how to reconcile those dark providences with the wisdom, holiness, goodness, and faithfulness of God. Wisdom will be of use both for caution to saints in their way, and for a check to sinners in their way. Be not righteous overmuch. In the acts of righteousness, be not transported, no not by a zeal for God, into intemperate heats or passions. Make not thyself over wise; be not conceited of thine own abilities; nor pretend to give law to, and give judgment upon all about thee; to find fault with every thing which is said and done, nor busy thyself in

other men's matters. Why shouldest thou destroy thyself, as fools do by meddling with that which belongs not to them.

Many things may be carried to a pernicious extreme. A man may be tenacious of mere forms and human inventions. He may pretend to kinds and degrees of righteousness not pointed out in the scriptures. He may become presumptuous, and intrude into unrevealed things. But it is certain that we cannot love or serve God too much, or be over righteous in any thing for which we can produce the warrant of his word. The extreme of over much wickedness is vastly more common and ruinous. When we hear men with profane solemnity, cautioning others against being too bold or active in the service of God, let us caution them not to bring themselves into destruction by presumptuous crimes.

It is profitable to lay hold, and keep hold of both these counsels, and to avoid extremes. He who fears God will be preserved from these dangers and snares.

As to sinners, it is true there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness; but let none say, therefore they may be as wicked as they will. Many that will not be wrought upon by the fear of God, and a dread of hell, will yet avoid those sins which ruin their health and estate, and expose them to public justice. They that truly fear God, have but one end to serve, and therefore act steadily. Wisdom will teach us how to conduct ourselves in reference to the sins and offences of others, and not to expect that those we deal with should be faultless; none are so. There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not, ver. 20. If we say, we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves. We sin even in our doing good; there is something defective, nay something offensive in our best performances. But the spirits of just men, when they are got clear of the body, are made perfect in holiness, Heb. 12. 23.

A most distinct feature in the character of the renewed, is the entire renunciation of all dependence on their own doings, and a simple-hearted reliance on the perfect righteousness, the obedience, atonement, and intercession of the Son of God. All of them are ready to say, with deep prostration of soul before God, If thou shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand? God be merciful to me a sinner! Forget not at the same time, that personal

righteousness, walking in newness of life, is the only unequivocal evidence of an interest by faith in the righteousness of the Redeemer.—(65.)

Wisdom teaches us not to be quick in apprehending and resenting affronts, ver. 21. Be not solicitous to know what people say; if they speak well of thee, it will feed thy pride, if ill, it will stir up thy passion; see therefore that thou approve thyself to God and thine own conscience, and then heed not what men say of thee. If thou heed every word that is spoken, perhaps thou wilt hear thine own servant curse thee; thou wilt be told that he does, and perhaps told falsely, if thou have thine ear open to tale-bearers, Prov. 29. 12. But we do not consult our own repose, nor our credit, if we take notice of every word that is spoken unfavourably of us; it is easier to pass by twenty such affronts than to avenge one. Wisdom puts us in mind of our own faults, ver. 22. When any affront or injury is done us, it is reasonable to examine our consciences, whether we have not done the same, or as bad to others. We must show all meekness towards all men, for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, Tit. 3. 2, 3.

16. Few texts have been appealed to by so great a variety of characters, as, "Be not righteous overmuch." It is a favourite with the profligate, who in condemning the enthusiasm of others, vainly fancies he is vindicating his own vice and folly. On the other hand, it is appealed to by the man of morality, who piques himself on his general decency of character, and considers every thing beyond this, as being righteous overmuch. Many who feel the services of religion an irksome drudgery, thousands whose religion consists in mere observance of outward forms, and none more than those who desire to keep on good terms with both Christ and the world, make constant use of this admonition.

The whole passage seems to be an instance of serious and impressive irony, of which the subject is, the line of conduct most prudent to be pursued, supposing the end in view to be the securing of favour, honour, and prosperity in the world. If your object be to shun the world's enmity, and to secure the world's favour, take care of these extremes!—Beware of assuming an appearance of sanctity greater than the world is disposed to approve of, or to bear with! Be on your guard on the other hand against the extreme of wickedness. Let prudent consideration set bounds to your licentiousness!—All scripture irony is serious, and intended to impress on the mind important lessons. The passage is in that respect similar to the striking one, Rejoice, O young man, &c. and so in this place, the admonition closes with an impressive recommendation of the fear of the Lord, as the best and only means of inspiring true peace and tranquil security of mind, as a sovereign antidote against the fear of man, and a powerful incentive to the faithful discharge of every duty.—*From Wardlaw.*

Holden thinks Solomon may be considered as stating the scoffing objection of a foolish man, in ver. 15, 16, in reply to the preceding encomium on wisdom, to which the following verses answer.

Ver. 23—29. *Experience of the evil of sin.*

Solomon found himself incapable of investigating many things; and in his search into the nature and reason of things to discover the wickedness of men's folly, their ignorance, vain mirth, and intemperance, he had been miserably deluded. Of this his idolatry, 1 Kings 11. was an awful instance. But he here speaks very contritely, and doubtless was delivered out of this snare of Satan. Yet he alone who habitually aims to please God can expect to escape; the careless sinner probably will fall to rise no more.

It well becomes penitents to say the worst they can of sin, for the truth is, we can never speak ill enough of it. Solomon, for his further humiliation, desired to see more of the sinfulness of sin; that is it which he lays the greatest stress upon in this inquiry, to know the wickedness of folly. Of the folly of sin; there is a folly in wickedness, even foolishness and madness. Wilful sinners are fools and madmen; they act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest.

He now discovered more than ever of the evil of that great sin which he himself had been guilty of, the loving of many strange women, 1 Kings 11. 1; this he here most feelingly laments. He found the remembrance of the sin more bitter than death. Death may be made honourable and comfortable, but this sin can be no other than shame and pain.

When Solomon looked over his courtiers, he found a few men honest and pious, but a woman among all his wives and concubines, who was thoroughly upright and godly, he had not found. How was he likely to find such a one among the multitude he had collected? If any of them had been previously well disposed, the situation in which they were placed would tend to render them all nearly of the same character. He here speaks the language of a penitent, warning others against the sins he had been betrayed into, and is not a mere satirist lashing indiscriminately half of the human race. Many a godly man can with thankfulness acknowledge that he hath found a prudent virtuous woman in the wife of his bosom; but those men who have gone in Solomon's track, cannot expect to find one.

He now discovered more than ever of the general corruption of man's nature: He therefore traces up all the streams of actual transgression to the fountain. The source of all the folly and madness that are in the world, is in man's apostasy from God; it is clear that man is corrupted and revolted; and is not as he was made.

He sums up the whole of his observations on the state and conduct of man in this—God indeed created man upright, and very good; but Adam having apostatized from him, his posterity have sought out an immense number of inventions, in order to find happiness in their state of rebellion; but these have only proved to be so many changes of impiety and iniquity, so that very few godly persons are to be found on earth. A most decisive testimony concerning original sin, and the wretched state of man by nature. It is indeed most lamentable that man, whom God made upright, hath found out so many inventions to render himself wicked and miserable. Let us bless Him for Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and seek for his special grace, that we may be numbered with his chosen people.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1—5. *Commendations of wisdom—Exhortations to obey those in authority.*

None of the rich, the powerful, the honourable, or the accomplished of the sons of men, are equally excellent, useful, or happy as the wise man. For who else can interpret the words of God, or deduce the proper instructions from his truths and dispensations? Solomon observes that wisdom confers a peculiar dignity on the possessor, and gives him influence.

Though by "the king," ver. 2, may be understood the temporal king, the context seems to prove that Jehovah is meant, who was peculiarly the King of the Israelites. The oath then refers to the covenant which God made with Abraham, and which was confirmed by an oath. I counsel thee to keep the commandments of the Lord on account of the obligation imposed on thee by God's covenant. No man's sin will escape the vengeance of God, for no one can control his power. What thou doest may well be referred to Him that doeth what he pleaseth.—(36.)

What madness then must it be for weak and dependent creatures to persist in rebellion against the Almighty! Un-

reserved submission is our only wisdom; he that keepeth his commandment to repent and obey shall feel no evil thing. The wise will discern that now is the time to seek for pardon and for peace. Alas, what numbers form an erroneous judgment, and bring misery upon themselves, both in this life and that which is to come!

1. Or, "But he who is impudent of face shall be hated."—*Wardlaw.*

Ver. 6—8. *To prepare for sudden evils and death.*

All the events concerning us, with the exact time of them, are determined and appointed in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, and all in wisdom; to every purpose there is a time prefixed, and it is the best time, for it is time and judgment, time appointed both in wisdom and righteousness. It cannot be foreseen by man; God has, in wisdom, concealed from us the knowledge of future events, that we may be always ready for changes. Men are miserable, because they are not sufficiently attentive.

We must all die. There is no discharge in that war. No obtaining a discharge; and no flight or concealment can save us, nor are there any weapons of effectual resistance. This is a field in which every man must advance alone to single combat, and sooner or later, every man must fall. If we reckon the inhabitants of our world at a thousand millions, and the average of a generation at thirty years, it will follow that ninety thousand die every day, upwards of sixty every minute, and one every second of time. How solemn the thought! how rapidly the world of spirits is peopling!—(65.)

O that men were wise, that they understood these things, that they would consider their latter end! Nothing human can avail a man in that day when God shall require his soul. The believer alone is prepared to meet the solemn summons without dismay. When he yields to the stroke of death, he resigns his soul into the Redeemer's hand. But with what horror, will the wicked perceive the approach of that dreadful foe! Frequently their crimes hasten this season; thus the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death.

Men's wickedness, by which they often evade or outface the justice of the prince, cannot secure them from the arrest of death, nor can the most obstinate sinner harden his heart against those terrors.

Ver. 9—13. *In the end it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.*

Solomon observed that many a time one man rules over another to his hurt; that is, to the hurt of the ruled; or, some consider it, to the hurt of the rulers. He had observed them to prosper and flourish in the abuse of their power; go in state to, and return in pomp from the place of judicature; but all this cannot secure their bodies from being buried in the dust, nor their names from being forgotten. He observed that their prosperity hardened them in their wickedness. Sinners herein deceive themselves. Vengeance comes slowly, but it comes surely: and wrath is in the mean time treasured up against the day of wrath.

The wicked man's days are as a shadow, not only uncertain and declining, as all men's days are, but altogether unprofitable. A good man's days have some substance in them; he lives to a good purpose; a wicked man's days are all as a shadow, empty and worthless. And faith assures us that it shall certainly be well, in time and to eternity, with the conscientious worshipper and servant of God. Let us then pray for an increase of faith; that we may view eternal things as near, real, and infinitely important.

Ver. 14—17. *The mysteries of providence.*

Faith alone can establish the heart in this mixed scene, where the righteous often suffer and the wicked prosper. This observation caused Solomon again to recommend the moderate use of worldly things with cheerfulness and contentment. Amidst all changes, such a frame of mind, if the result of right principles, might be preserved, and be the recompense and solace of all our labours in this evil world.

Then he commended joy, a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from a confidence in God, and his power, providence, and promise, because a man has no better thing under the sun, though a good man has much better things above the sun, than soberly and thankfully to make use of the things of this life according as his rank is; that is all the fruit he has for himself of the pains that he takes in the business of the world.

He would not have us undertake to give a reason for that which God does, for his way is past finding out; we must be contentedly ignorant of the meaning of God's proceedings in the government of the world.

Some think Solomon speaks of himself, that he was eager in prosecuting this great inquiry. But it was all labour in vain, ver. 17. Though a man be ever so industrious, though he labour to seek it out—though he be ever so ingenious, though he be a wise man in other things, and can fathom the counsels of kings themselves, and trace them by their footsteps—nay, though he be very confident of success, though he think to know it, yet he shall not, he cannot find it out.

Leaving the Lord to clear up all difficulties in his own time, we may cheerfully enjoy the comforts, and bear up under the trials of life, while peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, will abide within us through all outward changes, and even when flesh and heart shall fail. Trusting in the mercy and truth of God in Christ, we should give him credit for his wisdom, justice, and goodness, where our dark minds cannot discern them. Thus we shall escape perplexity and presumption, for studies to be wise above what is written must involve us in sin and perplexity, and can never lead to satisfactory conclusions. But to believe and obey here, will be a preparation for that world hereafter, where we shall know even as also we are known.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1—3. *Good and bad men fare alike as to this world.*

We are not to think our inquiries into the word or works of God useless, because we cannot comprehend all mysteries, or explain all difficulties; if we proceed with seriousness, we shall learn many things satisfactory to ourselves and useful to others.

Though Solomon could not find out the rules and reasons of the dispensations of Providence, he was assured that the righteous, the wise, and their works, were under the special care of God. Before he describes the temptation in its strength, he lays down a great unquestionable truth, which, if firmly believed, will be sufficient to break the temptation. This has been the way of God's people, in grappling with this difficulty, Job 24. 1; Jer. 12. 1; Hab. 1. 13. The events that affect them come to pass according to the will and counsel of God, which will turn that to be for them, which seemed to be most against them. Let this make us easy, whatever happens. But he knew that the events

of life were so mysteriously arranged, that no man could decide who were objects of God's special love, or under his wrath, by any outward occurrences. All things may be said to come alike to all. Some make this, and all that follows to the end of ver. 10, to be the perverse reasonings of atheists against the doctrine of God's providence; but Solomon might freely make concessions, when he had fixed truths sufficient to guard against ill use of what he grants. And God will certainly put a difference between the clean and the unclean, the precious and the vile, in the other world, though he does not seem to do so in this. The difference as to present happiness arises not from outward causes, but from the inward supports and consolations the righteous enjoy, and the benefit they derive from those varied trials and mercies. The righteous sacrifice, that is, they make conscience of worshipping God according to his will, both with inward and outward worship; the wicked sacrifice not, they live in the neglect of God's worship, and grudge to part with any thing for his honour. As far as the sons of men are left to themselves, their hearts are full of evil; and prosperity in sin causes them even to set God at defiance by impieties and daring wickedness. They proceed in this course till death, when they join those who have perished before them in their sins. Though, on this side death, the righteous and the wicked seem alike, on the other side there will be a vast difference between them.

Ver. 4—10. *All men must die—Comfort is their portion as to this life.*

While life continues, an afflicted man may hope for better days, and we may hope for the conversion of the vilest sinner. In this view life is valuable—the most despicable living man's state is preferable to that of the most noble who have died impenitent. Solomon shows the madness and folly of a wicked life, all the fancied benefits of which must soon be left for ever. But though believers also leave this world, and all pursuits on earth vanish as a dream, they will possess a better and more enduring substance.

Solomon, having spoken to the case of the wicked, proceeds to exhort the wise and pious to cheerful confidence in God, who will be sure to do well to those whose works are accepted of him. They should seek to possess a peaceful conscience, a lively hope, and a contented mind, enjoy-

ing with gratitude the bounty of Providence, whatever may be their relative condition in life. The meanest morsel, coming from their Father's love, and in answer to prayer, will have a peculiar relish.

We have the particular instances of this cheerfulness prescribed;—1. Let thy spirits be easy and pleasant, let there be a good heart, so the word is; this distinguishes from carnal mirth and sensual pleasure, which are the evils of the heart, both a symptom and a cause of much evil there. 2. Make use of the comforts and enjoyments which God has given thee; thine, not another's. Not the bread of deceit, or the wine of violence, but that which is honestly got, else thou canst not eat it with any comfort, nor expect a blessing upon it; such as are agreeable to thy place and station. Lay out what God has given thee, for the ends for which thou art intrusted with it, as being but a steward. 3. Evidence thy cheerfulness, ver. 8; observe a proportion in thine expenses. Not that we must place our happiness in any of the delights of sense, or set our hearts upon them, but what God has given us we must use, under the limitations of sobriety and wisdom, and not forgetting the poor. 4. Make thyself agreeable to thy relations; let them share with thee, and make them easy too. When we do the duty of relations, we may expect the comfort of them.

Rejoice, and have a merry heart, if God now accepts thy works. If thou art reconciled to God, and recommended to him, then thou hast reason to be cheerful,—otherwise not. Our first care must be to make our peace with God, and obtain his favour, then, Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy. It is all thou canst get from this world; That is thy portion in the things of this life. In God, and another life, thou shalt have a better portion, and a better recompense for thy labours in religion; but for thy pains about the things under the sun, this is all thou canst expect.

The description of the conduct of the first christians in Acts 2. 46, 47, affords a fine exemplification of verse 7. Continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. The same kind of joy is here described. It is the gladness of heart that springs from a sense of the Divine favour, from the lifting up of the light of God's

countenance. The expressions, ver. 8, are of the same import as the exhortation, *Rejoice evermore.*—(65.)

Let us then apply ourselves to the business of life, while life lasts, and so use the enjoyments of it, as by them to be fitted for the employments; let the joy of the Lord be its strength, and oil to its wheels, ver. 10. There is not only something to be had, but something to be done in this life. This is the world of service, that to come is the world of recompense. What good we have an opportunity of doing, we must do, while we have the opportunity; and do it with our might, whatever difficulties and discouragements we may meet with.

Neither the trials nor the comforts of life are to render us inattentive to our duties. All in their various stations may find some work to do. And above all, sinners have the salvation of their souls to seek after, believers have to evidence their faith, adorn the gospel, glorify God, and serve their generation. Let us then beware of supineness or self-dependence in any of our undertakings. And if the work of life be not done when our time is done, we are undone for ever. When we are in the grave, it will be too late to mend the errors of life, too late to repent, and seek peace with God.

Ver. 11, 12. *Disappointments common.*

Solomon observed another disappointment in earthly things. Men's success seldom equals their expectations. We must use means, but not trust to them; if we succeed, we must give God the praise, Ps. 44. 3; if we be crossed, we must acquiesce in his will. These are the appointments of God; but those who do not regard him, speak of them as chance, and exclaim against their fortune. But there is a time allotted to every man in which to seek and obtain the most important advantages; in general they know not, or observe not that time. This is the case especially with those who defer the great concerns of their souls. They are caught in Satan's net which he baits with some worldly object; for which they reject or neglect the gospel, and go on in sin till they suddenly fall into everlasting destruction. Men often find their bane where they sought bliss.

Ver. 13—18. *The benefits of wisdom.*

Solomon still recommends wisdom as necessary to the preserving of our peace and the perfecting of our business, notwithstanding the vanities and crosses which

human affairs are subject to. He here gives an instance of a poor man who with his wisdom did great service.

He by his wisdom delivered the city, by prudent instructions given to the besieged, or by a prudent treaty with the besiegers. Being poor, he was slighted by the city, though he was wise, and had been an instrument to save them from ruin. Many who have well merited, have been ill paid. It is well that useful men have a God to trust to, who will be their bountiful Rewarder; for, among men, great services are often envied, and rewarded with evil for good. From this he observes the great usefulness and excellency of wisdom, and what a blessing it makes men to their country. A man may by his wisdom effect that which he could never compass by his strength. Wisdom, that is, religion and piety, is better than all military endowments or accoutrements. If God be for us, who can be against us, or stand before us?

Hence he observes the power of wisdom, though it labour under external disadvantages. How forcible are right words! What is spoken wisely, should be spoken calmly, and then it will be heard in quiet, and calmly considered. Hence he observes that wise and good men must often content themselves with the satisfaction of having done good, or, at least, endeavoured it, when they cannot do the good they would, nor have the praise they should.

He infers what a great deal of mischief one wicked man may do; One sinner destroyeth much good. How many of the good gifts both of nature and Providence does one sinner destroy and make waste of! He who destroys his own soul, destroys much good. And what a great deal of mischief may one wicked man do in a town or country! One sinner may draw many into his pernicious ways; one sinner may be the ruin of a town, as one Achan troubled the whole camp of Israel. The wisdom of some would have healed the nation, but, through the wickedness of a few, it would not be healed. See who are the friends and enemies of a kingdom or a family, if one saint does much good, and one sinner destroys much good.

While we lament over these follies and ruinous mistakes, let us watch against ingratitude; let us learn submission to the will and mercy of God, then none of our labours will be in vain however now neglected or despised. Let us especially

remember that the great Deliverer of sinners from the wrath to come, and the power of Satan, became poor for our sakes, was despised and hated, nay even now is treated with ingratitude and contempt; we then shall feel that we have the less reason to complain of such treatment.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1—3. *The care requisite to preserve a character for wisdom.*

Having spoken of the excellence of wisdom, Solomon proceeds to lay down maxims, relative to its advantages, and the mode of exercising them.—(65.)

When a man has acquired a reputation for wisdom, or any other qualification, if he becomes a little heedless, self-indulgent, or imprudent, it will tarnish his character, and cause him to be neglected.

Those who make a profession of religion, have need to abstain from all appearances of evil; a character is soon sullied, and they have a great deal of reputation to lose. A wise man has great advantage above a fool. He goes about his business with dexterity, and goes through it with despatch; but a fool has always to seek when he has any thing to do; he goes awkwardly about it, like a man that is left-handed. He that is either silly or wicked, soon shows that he is so by some impropriety, ver. 3; he discovers it as plainly as if he had told it. Sin is the reproach of sinners, wherever they go.

Ver. 4—10. *Respecting subjects and rulers.*

Solomon appears, in this passage, to continue his discourse, and to caution subjects, when aggrieved, not to seek redress in a precipitate manner, or to yield to the suggestions of resentment and pride. In all these matters wisdom is profitable to direct to proper means and occasions, to prevent mischief, and to hinder a man from wearying himself in vain.

If thy ruler, upon some misinformation, or some mismanagement of thine, is displeased at thee, forget not thy duty; do not, in a passion, quit thy post, as despairing ever to regain his favour; wait a while, and thou wilt find that yielding pacifies great offences.

He grants there is an evil often seen, ver. 5—7; it is a mistake which rulers, consulting personal affections more than public interest, are often guilty of, that men are not preferred according to their merit; either the ruler knows not how to value

them, or the terms of preferment are such as they cannot in conscience comply with.

Those are often most forward with their schemes and offers of aid, who are least qualified for the work; least aware either of the difficulties of its execution, or the uncertainty of its consequences. The body politic, like the animal body, will ever be most vigorous and thriving when all the members keep their proper places, and duly fulfil their functions. And the same similitude and remark is applied by inspired authority to the church or the body of Christ—that all the members should have the same care one for another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it, 1 Cor. 12. 14—25.—(65.)

Ver. 11—15. *Of foolish talk.*

There is a practice in the east of charming adders by the power of sounds, see Ps. 58. 5, and rendering them harmless for a time. It is alluded to, ver. 11; and whether a fact, or only the general belief, the sentiment is the same. The babbler is a dangerous person, capable of doing serious injury. His tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Contradiction and violence only make his tongue the more virulent. He must be charmed; we must find the way to tame him, and keep him gentle. If he be a man of power, the necessity for cautious management is the greater. But a babbler is dangerous to himself as well as others. Rash, unprincipled, or slanderous talk incessantly exposes to hazards, and brings open or secret vengeance upon him.—(65.)

It takes rise from his own weakness and wickedness; the foolishness bound up in his heart is the corrupt spring out of which all these polluted streams flow. As soon as he begins to speak, you may perceive his folly; at the very first he talks idly. The end of his talk is madness; he will presently break out into extravagances. It is not strange if those that begin foolishly, end madly; an ungoverned tongue, the more liberty is allowed, grows the more violent. Many, who are empty of sense, are full of words, and the least solid are the most noisy. Would we duly consider our own ignorance about future events, it would cut off many idle words we foolishly multiply.

Fools toil a great deal to no purpose, ver. 15. All their labour is for the world and the body, and they choose that service

which is perfect drudgery, rather than that which is perfect liberty. They have not capacity to apprehend the plainest thing, such as the entrance into a great city, where one would think it were impossible for a man to miss his road. Imprudent management of business robs both of the comfort and of the benefit of it. But it is the excellency of the way to the heavenly city, that it is a high-way, in which the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err, Isa. 35. 8; yet sinful folly makes men miss that way.

Ver. 16—20. *Mutual duties of rulers and subjects.*

Solomon here observes how much the happiness of a land depends upon the character of its rulers. The people cannot be happy when their princes are childish and voluptuous, ver. 16. When thy king is a child, not so much in age, as in understanding. Rehoboam was a child all the days of his life, and his family and kingdom fared the worse for it. Nor is it better with a people, when their princes are slaves to their appetites.

Of what ill consequence slothfulness is both to private and public affairs! ver. 18. It is the ruin of nations, families, and souls. All are industrious to get money. Money, of itself, answers nothing; it will neither feed nor clothe, though it answers occasions of this present life, as what is to be had, may generally be had for money; —but it answers nothing to the soul; it will not procure the pardon of sin, the favour of God, and the peace of conscience. The soul, as it is not redeemed, so it is not maintained with corruptible things, as silver and gold. All sin begins in the mind, and therefore the first risings of it must be curbed and suppressed. Government and the distinctions in society are the appointments of God, and productive of much good to mankind. Ill wishes against them ought not to be allowed even in our thoughts, nor vented in the most private manner. God sees what men do, and hears what they say in secret; and, when he pleases, can bring it to light by strange and unsuspected ways.

And if there be hazard in the most secret imaginations and whispers of rebellion against earthly rulers, what must be the peril that arises from every deed, word, or thought of insubordination to the King of kings, and Lord of lords? He seeth in secret. His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good. His ear is ever

open. Sinner! curse not THIS KING, no, not in thy inmost thought! Your curses cannot injure Him; but his curse, coming down upon you, will sink you to the lowest hell.—(65.)

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1—6. *An exhortation to liberality.*

Solomon had often, in this book, pressed the rich to take the comfort of their riches; here he presses it upon them to do good to others, and to abound in liberality. Thou must give bread, the necessary supports of life, Isa. 58. 7. It must be *thy* bread, which is honestly got; it is no charity to give that which is none of our own to give. Give freely, though it may seem thrown away and lost, as that which is cast upon the waters.

Be free and liberal in works of charity. Give to many. Excuse not thyself with the good thou hast done, from the good thou hast further to do. It is not lost, but well laid out; it brings in full interest, in the present gifts of God's providence, and graces and comforts of his Spirit. Our opportunity for well doing is very uncertain. We have reason to expect evil upon the earth, for we are born to trouble; what the evil may be we know not, but, that we may be ready for it, whatever it is, it is our wisdom, in the day of prosperity, to be doing good.

He obviates the objections which might be made against this duty, and the excuses of the uncharitable. Are the heavens bountiful to the earth, and wilt thou grudge thy bounty to thy poor brother? If the clouds be full of rain, they will empty themselves; if there be charity in the heart, it will show itself, Jam. 2. 15, 16. Riches cannot profit us, if we do not benefit others.

Some will say that their sphere of usefulness is low and narrow; they cannot do the good that others can, therefore they will sit still, and do nothing. Where the tree falls, or happens to be, there it shall be, for the benefit of those to whom it belongs. Every man must labour to be a blessing to that place where the providence of God casts him. Wherever we are, we may find good work to do, if we have but hearts to do it. This is applied to death; let us, as good trees, bring forth the fruits of righteousness, because death will shortly come, and we shall then be determined to an unchangeable state

of happiness or misery, according to what was done in the body.

Some will object the many discouragements they have met with in their charity. If we stand magnifying every little difficulty, ver. 4, starting objections, and fancying hardships where there is none, we shall never go on, much less go through with our work, or make any thing of it. If the husbandman should decline, or leave off sowing, for the sake of every flying cloud, and reaping for the sake of every blast of wind, he would make but an ill account of his husbandry at the year's end. Those who are deterred and driven off, by small and seeming difficulties, from great and real duties, will never bring any thing to pass in religion; there will always arise some wind, some cloud or other, at least in our imagination, to discourage us. Winds and clouds are in God's hands, are designed to try us, and our principles oblige us to endure hardness.

Some will say, Why should we depend upon the general promise of a blessing on the charitable, unless we saw which way to expect the operation of it? Thou knowest not the work of God, nor is it fit thou shouldest; thou mayest be sure he will make good his word of promise, though he does not tell thee how. God's work shall certainly agree with his word, whether we see it or not. And we may well trust God to provide for us, without our anxious, disquieting cares, and therein to recompense us for our charity, since it was without any knowledge or forecast of ours, that our bodies were wrought, and our souls put into them. The argument is the same with that of our Saviour, Matt. 6. 25.

Go on, proceed and persevere in well doing, let slip no opportunity; be doing good, some way or other, all the day long, as the husbandman follows his labour from morning till night. Be not weary of well doing, for in due season, in God's time, and that is the best time, you shall reap, Gal. 6. 9. This is applicable to our endeavours for the good of the souls of others; let us continue them, for, though we have long laboured in vain, we may at length succeed. Let ministers sow both morning and evening; for who can tell which shall prosper? The Lord works by them at those times, and in those ways, of which they are not aware. Let it suffice that God will accept and recompense every endeavour to benefit others;

the whole will serve the purposes of his glory, and the salvation of souls.

1. In the east, several sorts of grain, particularly rice, are sown on the wet mud, after the ground has been flooded, or even before the water has quite gone away.

Ver. 7—10. *An admonition to prepare for death and judgment, and a serious persuasion to young persons to be religious.*

Light is put for life. It cannot be denied that life is sweet; it is sweet to bad men, because they have their portion in this life; it is sweet to good men, because it is the time of preparation for a better; it is sweet to all men. Life is sweet, therefore we have need to double guard ourselves, lest we love it too well.

Here is a caution to think of death, even in the midst of life, and of life when it is most sweet, and we are most apt to forget death. The darkness of death is opposed to the light of life. It is good for us often to remember those days of darkness, that we may not be lifted up with pride, nor lulled asleep in carnal security. Notwithstanding the long continuance of life, and many comforts, we must remember the days of darkness, because those will certainly come; and they will come with the less terror, if we have thought of them before.

Solomon makes an animated and affecting address to young persons. He supposes they would not be convinced all was vanity till they had made the trial. They would desire opportunity to pursue every pleasure, and to gratify every inclination. Well, then, follow your desires wherever they lead you—but be assured that for all these things God will call you into judgment. His address is more emphatical, as it is by way of irony. Alas, how numerous are those who give loose to every appetite, and rush into every vicious pleasure, to which they can find access! God registers every one of their sinful thoughts and desires, their idle words and wicked works, and will at last produce the account of crimes they have forgotten. The evil of sin will be the evil of punishment; and what the sinner is fond of, as good for the flesh, because it gratifies the appetites of it, will prove evil, and hurtful to it, and therefore put it far from thee, the further the better. Solomon exhorts them seriously to follow that conduct in their youth which may best remove or prevent sorrow in future years, and the wrath of God in a future state. If they would avoid remorse and

terror, if they would have hope and comfort on a dying bed, if they would escape temporal and eternal misery, let them remember the vanity of youthful pleasures, and the uncertainty of human life.

That Solomon means more than mere cheerful, light-hearted merriment—that he means the pleasures of sin, is evident from the phrases which follow. The ways of a man's heart, in scripture language, do not mean the ways of the renewed heart, but of the heart in its natural state, unregenerated by the grace of God. His object is to draw the young to purer, nobler, and more lasting joys. He immediately checks the indulgences of time by pointing to eternity. Let conscience speak freely, and it will ratify the assurances of God's word. It is not the language of a sated sensualist, grudging youthful pleasures, because he can no longer partake of them. It is not the language of a morose character, who would condemn all to austerity. It is the language of experience; of one who has run this course, and by a miracle of mercy has been brought back in safety. He would persuade the young from trying a course from which so few have returned.—(65.)

If the young would desire to die in peace with God, and with a good hope for eternity—if they would live a life of true happiness, whatever its length—if they would be secure for a future world when summoned from this—let them, as the words which follow point out, Remember their Creator in the days of their youth. They will be strangers to true enjoyment till they enter on a religious life—a life of faith upon the Son of God. O taste, and see that the Lord is good.—(7.)

It is indeed most sinful and foolish for either old or young to indulge their lusts, and live unconcerned about Christ and his salvation, when heavy troubles, an important death, an awful judgment, and an endless eternity are before them—they know not how near.—(10.)

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1-7. *A description of the infirmities of age, to enforce the exhortation to early piety.*

Solomon here gives an exhortation, which connects with the close of the preceding chapter. In allusion to man's natural forgetfulness of God, he calls upon young persons to remember their Creator. Remember thy Creators; the word is plural, as it is Job 35. 10. Where

is God my Makers? For God said, Let us make man—us, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We need be called upon to remember our Creator, that we may perceive our need of a Redeemer and Sanctifier. We should remember God's glorious perfections as displayed in the works of creation, our dependence on him, the duties we owe him, and our failure in discharging them. We should remember our sins against our Creator, repent, and seek forgiveness of them. We should remember our duties, and set about them, looking to him for grace and strength, and desiring to live to his glory. This should be done early, while the body is vigorous, and the spirits active. When a man has the anguish of reviewing a mispent life, his not having renounced sin and worldly vanities till he is forced to say, I have no pleasure in them, renders his sincerity very questionable to his own conscience.

Then follows a beautiful, figurative description of old age and its infirmities, which has some difficulties to us, who are not acquainted with the common phrases and metaphors used in Solomon's age and language; but the general scope is plain—to show how uncomfortable, generally, the days of old age are.

It begins, ver. 2, with a general statement of the pains and miseries attendant upon old age. The first clause describes the insensibility to pleasure, the second the succession of pains and infirmities which usually attend that period of life, and is an image taken from the weather, denoting a perpetual succession of pains and infirmities. Age may be compared to a season of continued gloom, when the cheerful rays of the sun seldom shine forth, but after torrents of rain the clouds return dark and lowering.—(36.)

The keepers of the house, ver. 3, denote the hands and arms. They are such a protection to the body as guards and attendants are to the habitations of princes. They are here said to tremble, which denotes the palsied arm of age. The strong men are the knees and legs, which bend and totter under the aged. The grinders, the teeth, cease because they are few. The darkened windows denote the eyes and their infirmities. The lips, which may be compared to the doors of a house, ver. 4, shall be shut in the streets, shall press close together, by reason of the loss of the teeth, when the sound of the grinding of food is low. The aged, being weary

of couches, on which they enjoy no rest, arise as soon as the birds awake their first notes in the morning. All the organs employed to produce or to enjoy music shall be brought low; they shall have no power to afford delight; the old man is insensible to the charms of melody, arising as well from deafness as insensibility to earthly enjoyments. Being subject to doubts and alarms, ver. 5, and being conscious of the decay of their powers, the aged consider the least undertaking as hazardous and difficult. The almond tree represents the hoary head, the usual attendant on advanced years. The old man, who may be compared to a grasshopper from the shrinking of his form, shall be a burden to himself; and satisfaction shall be at an end, because man goeth to the grave, his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.—(36.)

As the four preceding verses are a figurative description of the infirmities that usually accompany old age, so ver. 6 notices the circumstances attending dissolution. We are to understand it as referring to something plain to common observers. Before the silver cord, or spinal marrow, be loosed, deprived of feeling and motion, and the golden bowl be broken, that is, before the head with its organs ceases to perform its functions, and the pitcher or heart be shattered at the fountain, and the wheels or lungs, the organs of respiration, broken at the cistern, then shall the dust return to the earth—the whole human frame shall be dissolved, and the spirit shall return to God that gave it—the immortal soul survives the wreck of the body.—(36.)

The infirmities of age ought to teach us the evil of sin. If sin had not entered into the world, these infirmities would not have been known. They are all the fruits and effects of sin. Surely, then, the aged man should reflect on the evil of sin, which is the sad cause of all his sufferings; for sin is the disease, and all our afflictions are but the symptoms of it. But God will be with the believer. God will give him patience to endure all his pains and infirmities, and in his own good time will relieve him from the burden of the flesh, and give abundant entrance into his eternal kingdom and glory.—(7.)

We should remember our Creator in the days of our youth, that he may remember us with favour, when the evil days come, and his comforts may delight

our souls when the delights of sense are worn off. Let us seek the Lord and his salvation before the vital powers fail, and the soul be fixed in a state of misery. Let us not therefore indulge the appetites of the body, nor let sin reign in our bodies, for they are mortal, Rom. 6. 12.

Happy indeed are those who encounter the unnumbered infirmities and troubles of old age, and the fears and pangs of death, in full assurance that Jesus loved them, and gave himself for them.—(10.)

Death is indeed terrible to the wicked, whose souls go to God as an Avenger; but comfortable to the godly, whose souls go to God as a Father, into whose hands they cheerfully commit them, through a Mediator, without whom sinners may justly dread to think of going to God.

2—6. *Harmer* considers ver. 2 as a general allegorical description of the decline of life, as being its winter; ver. 3—5, as descriptive of the particular bitterness of that part of life; ending with a mention of death and the grave; ver. 6, as emblematically representing the state of the body after death, before its dissolving into dust.

4. The corn in the east is ground in every house for daily use, by hand-mills; this is the first work in the morning; the noise of the grinding, and the songs by which the labour is cheered, are among the earliest sounds. Where it is not heard, something unusual may be supposed to have taken place.

Ver. 8—14. *A repetition of the truth, that all is vanity, with warning of the judgment to come.*

Solomon is here drawing towards a close, and is earnest to prevail with his hearers, to seek for that satisfaction in God only, and in their duty to him, which they can never find in the creature. He repeats his text, VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY. He recommends what he had written upon this subject by Divine direction and inspiration, to serious consideration. They are the words of one that could speak by dear-bought experience of the vanity of the world, which can do nothing to ease men of the burden of sin. They are the words of one that was endowed with extraordinary measures of wisdom; not only wise as a prince, but wise as a preacher to win souls. He was one that made it his business to do good, and to use wisdom aright. Let not the people be despised, as either unworthy, or incapable of good knowledge; even those that are well taught, need to be still taught, that they may grow in knowledge.

As he considered the worth of souls, and the weight of the subject he preached on, he gave good heed to what he spake and wrote. Most are for smooth things that

flatter them, rather than right things that direct them, Isa. 30. 10; but to those who understand their true interest, words of truth will always be acceptable words. The words used by prophets and wise men were intended to alarm the conscience, to show men their guilt and danger, while they tended to quicken them in fleeing from the wrath to come, and in walking in the way to heaven.

The truths of God prick men to the heart, Acts 2. 37, and put them upon thinking, when they grow remiss, and exerting themselves with more vigour. They are as goads to such as are dull, and draw back, and nails to such as are desultory, and draw aside; means to establish the heart, and confirm good resolutions, that we may not sit loose to our duty, nor ever be taken off from it.

And these words of the wise are given from one shepherd. Can there be any hesitation about the meaning of this? The Shepherd of Israel, he is the original Giver of all the words of inspired wisdom. The teachers and guides were many, but they received all their communications from him. The designation is most frequently applied in scripture to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Messiah, the Son of God, the chief and supreme Shepherd of the church. The prophets, who prophesied of the grace that was to come unto the church in the fulness of time, inquired diligently, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which were then reported unto them, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Thus the Spirit that spoke by the prophets and by the apostles is the same. The words of the wise are the true sayings of God, to be received by us as such with humble reverence, lively gratitude, constant remembrance, ready and universal obedience.—(16. 65.)

Solomon therefore exhorts every one to be admonished by the instructions he had given. To write many books was not suited to the shortness of human life, and would be a weariness to the writer, and the reader. All things would be vanity and vexation, except they led to this conclusion—That to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole of man. It

is the whole interest, privilege, honour, and happiness of man, to fear the wrath and to seek the favour of God; and to become his spiritual worshippers and servants, walking in all his ordinances and commandments blameless.

Let us then cease from being careful and troubled about many things, attend to the one thing needful, and choose the good part that shall never be taken from us. Let us now come to him as a merciful Saviour, who will soon come as an almighty Judge, when he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and manifest the counsels of all hearts.

The eye of Omniscience having witnessed all, and the Mind that embraces present, past, and future with equal minuteness and equal certainty, having retained all, the sentence pronounced on each will be founded in complete and unerring knowledge of all that he has been, and all that he has done.—(65.)

Let us then keep in view the solemnities of a coming judgment. And, while our hopes of acceptance at that day are founded exclusively on grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, let us not forget the obligations under which we lie, to glorify God in our bodies and our spirits, which are his. Let not the vanities of the world seduce us from the possession and pursuit of enduring joys. Let nothing tempt us to repeat Solomon's unwise and dangerous experiment. Why does God record in his word, and urge upon our attention, that *ALL IS VANITY*, but to keep us from deceiving ourselves where deception would be our ruin? Why does he warn us away from the streams of false delight, but to conduct us to the Fountain of unmingled and eternal joy? He makes nothing our duty which is not our interest: under this conviction let us hear again the aim of the whole of this treatise, the grand lesson it was intended to teach and to impress. May it be graven in all our hearts; may God, by whose authority it comes, give us to enjoy the full experience of its truth. Fear God, and keep his commandments—for this is all that concerneth man.—(65.)

11. *Holden* thus paraphrases this verse: The words of the wise, men inspired of God, are as stimulating and quickening to the mind as goads are to sluggish oxen, and like nails are deeply infixed in the heart that receives them. The collectors, who arranged the words of the inspired writers in the sacred canon, have published them

as proceeding from the inspiration of one Shepherd, namely, God.

12. The labour both of writing and of reading was very much greater in those days than in later times, from the form of the books, and the manner in which they were written. The invention of printing has now put within the power of man a mighty instrument, both for good and evil, which it is most important should be actively

used for the spiritual welfare of mankind, by the preparation and circulation of books, the contents of which are in conformity to holy scripture, and calculated, under the Divine blessing, to teach the way of salvation. The question is not whether the power of reading or the means of gratifying it shall be withheld, whether the young shall be taught to read, and whether books shall be written, but *how* to turn these to good account.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

All scripture, we are sure, is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for the support and advancement of his kingdom among men. It is not the less so because some things dark and hard to be understood are found in it, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest to their own destruction. In our belief of the Divine extraction, and of the spiritual exposition of this book, we are confirmed by the ancient, constant, and concurring testimony, both of the church of the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, and who never had any doubt of the authority of this book, and also of the christian church.

The writer of this ancient book undoubtedly was Solomon, and it is a part of his songs, which we read, were a thousand and five, 1 Kings 4. 32. At what period of his life it was composed does not appear. The title signifies, A Song of Songs, or, The most beautiful Song; or, according to others, A series of Songs. The title of the book in the Chaldee is, The songs and hymns which Solomon the prophet, the king of Israel, uttered in the spirit of prophecy, before the Lord. Many commentators suppose it to be one continued poem, and that the person primarily referred to was the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who was married to Solomon: see 1 Kings 3. 1. Others apprehend that it was a native of Palestine, espoused some years later. Upon this question it is unnecessary to enter, and by viewing the book, with many of the best commentators, as a series of short poems or idyls, and considering them as parabolical allegories unconnected with each other, we avoid much useless and unnecessary inquiry, as well as much vague conjecture and many difficulties in reconciling the details.

As a poetical composition the original is very beautiful, and is undoubtedly a pastoral allegory full of the imagery used in eastern poetry of that description. Viewing it as parabolical, it describes fictitious events applicable by way of simile to the illustration of important truth. Such were the parables of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as such the true meaning of this book is the love and affection manifested by Christ, the Bridegroom of souls, towards his faithful people, and their return of love and gratitude towards him. In no other view can we account for a book being included in the sacred canon in which the name of God is not mentioned, and no direct reference made to religious observances; but the dignity, sublimity, and majesty of its style show it to be no human composition, and the power and efficacy it has over the human heart, when rightly explained, is a powerful evidence of its being the word of God. The narrowness and wickedness of the human mind being such as scarcely to comprehend or attain any clear idea of the Divine nature, God has condescended in a manner to contract the infinity of his glory and to exhibit it by such imagery as we are capable of comprehending—to descend, as it were, in the sacred scriptures, and to appear with human senses and affections. There can be no doubt this book is a Divine allegory which represents the reciprocal love between Christ and his church of true believers, under figures taken from the relation and affection that subsist between a bridegroom and his espoused bride; an emblem continually employed in scripture, as describing the nearest, firmest, and most sure relation: see Psalm 45; Isaiah 54. 5, 6; 62. 5; Jer. 2. 2; 3. 1; also in Ezekiel, Hosea, and in many other places, especially by our Lord himself, Matt. 9. 15; 25. 1: see also Rev. 21. 2, 9; Eph. 5. 27. St. Paul in a similar manner allegorizes the history of Sarah and Hagar, Gal. 4. 22—31. Nor should we forget that the apostle gives the preference to charity or Divine love, among the chief virtues of the soul, 1 Cor. 13. 13. Faith goes out from the sinner to rest upon Jesus Christ, hope looks unto a country we do not yet possess, but love, Divine love, alone fills heaven to all eternity, all the choicest affections and virtues of the soul being as nothing when compared to that love whereby it is united to Christ and made zealous for good works.

This book has some reference to the state of the Jewish church as waiting for the coming of the promised Messiah, but more generally accords to the fellowship between Christ and true believers in every age. Here, on earth, the believer loves and rejoices in an unseen Saviour, and seeks happiness from his spiritual presence, Christ manifests himself to the believer as he doth not unto the world, and these visits are earnest and foretastes of heavenly joy. But they are interrupted on many accounts. They are often lost by neglect or sin, and can only be recovered by humble repentance and renewed diligence. These things are represented in dialogues, in which sometimes the church, or an individual believer, speaks of or to Christ, and he speaks in return. There are other speakers, as the virgins attendant on the bride, and the daughters of Jerusalem. Thus the various experiences and duties of the believer are delineated in a very animated and edifying manner. There is no character in the church of Christ, and no situation in which the believer is placed, but what may be traced in this book, as humble inquirers will find on collation with other scriptures, by the assistance of God the Holy Spirit in answer to their supplications. In studying this book, let them seek to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; that being rooted and grounded in love, they may be able to comprehend

with all saints, what is the length and breadth, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that they may be filled with all the fulness of God.

Much of the language has been misunderstood by expositors and translators. Some, not entering into the spirit and meaning of oriental poetry, erroneously cause passages to be considered as coarse and indelicate: while others confound the literal and the allegorical senses so as to give neither distinctly; and by their misapplication of the allegory, and their attempts fully to explain every expression in a mystical sense, have bewildered themselves and their readers, and have sometimes even given occasion for the derision of the enemies of the truth. The difference between the customs and manners of Europe, and those of the east, must especially be kept in view; and as they have been better understood by later writers, more has been of late done to explain the language and allusions of this book. Many circumstances in our manners are misunderstood by orientals as much as theirs are by us. The little acquaintance with eastern customs possessed by most of our expositors and translators also, has in many cases prevented a correct rendering. But their chief errors, that they have given literal and verbal renderings of Hebrew terms instead of selecting those of a similar import; thus a very different meaning is often conveyed to the reader of a version, from that which is understood by those who read the original. In other instances, the changes in our own language during the last two or three centuries materially affect the manner in which expressions are viewed, and they must not be judged by modern notions. But the great outlines, soberly interpreted, in the obvious meaning of the allegory, fully accord with the affection and experience of the sincere christian. It is impossible to read or meditate upon this book, in a spirit of humble devotion, without being convinced that no other poem, though outwardly of a similar character, can, with any propriety, be explained so as to describe the state of the heart of the believer, at different times, or can excite his admiring, adoring, and grateful feelings of love to God our Saviour in a way at all comparable with "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's."—(20. 25, 27. 30, 33. 41. *Henry, Scott.*)

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. *The title.*

Solomon wrote many poems, 1 Kings 4. 32, but this sacred allegory alone has been preserved, and inserted in holy writ. It is "the Song of Songs" not only more excellent than all the rest of the Songs of Solomon, but above any penned by other writers, for it is wholly taken up with describing the glories and excellences of Christ, and the love which is between him and his redeemed people.

Ver. 2—6. *The church confesses her deformity, and praises Christ.*

The church, or rather the believer, speaks here in the character of the spouse of the King, the Messiah. She had been thinking much upon her Beloved, desiring his presence, and the consolations of his love, and thus begins to speak of him without mentioning his name. Those who have tasted that he is gracious, the more they experience his peace and joy the more fervent their desires will be. Those who are full of Christ themselves, are ready to think that others should be so too.

The kisses of his mouth evidently mean those cheering assurances of pardon and reconciliation with which believers are favoured from time to time. Especially when deeply humbled for their sins, in the midst of their fears and distresses they obtain such discoveries of the Redeemer's glory and grace, and of his power and willingness to save, as dispel their sorrows, fill

them with peace and joy in believing, and cause them to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. Of these sweet consolations the spouse here speaks, desiring their renewal and increase. Then addressing Christ as present, she adds, For thy love is better than wine.

All true believers earnestly desire the manifestations of Christ's love to their souls; they desire no more to make them happy than the assurances of his favour, the lifting up of the light of his countenance upon them, Ps. 4. 6, 7, and the knowledge of that love of his which passes knowledge; this is the one thing they desire, Ps. 27. 4.

Gracious souls take more pleasure in loving Christ, and being loved of him, in the fruits and gifts of his love, and in the pledges and assurances of it, than any ever took in the most exquisite delights of sense, and it is more reviving to them than the richest cordial to one ready to faint. Christ's love is in itself, and in the account of all the saints, more valuable and desirable than the best entertainments this world can give. Those only may expect the comfortable tokens of his favour, who take more pleasure in spiritual joys than in any bodily refreshments.

Christ's graces and comforts are most agreeable and acceptable to all that rightly understand both them and themselves. Thy name is an ointment poured forth, thou art so, and so is all whereby thou hast made

thyself known; thy very name is precious to all the saints, it is an ointment and perfume which rejoices the heart. The unfolding of Christ's name is as the opening of a box of precious ointment. The name of Christ is not now like ointment sealed up, but like ointment poured forth; which denotes the freeness and the fulness of the communications of his grace by the gospel.

Because of the general affection that all holy souls have to Christ; Therefore do the virgins love thee. It is Christ's love shed abroad in our hearts, that draws them out in love to him. Those whom he hath redeemed and sanctified are the virgins that love Jesus Christ, and follow him whithersoever he goes, Rev. 14. 4.

The thoughts of the excellency of Christ, remind believers of their want of conformity to him. They long to follow him more nearly, and to be more like him. But they feel unable to do this without his special grace, and therefore entreat him to draw them by the quickening influences of his Spirit. Then they will run after him in the ways of holy obedience. *We* will run after thee, enabled then to keep up with those believers who are now foremost in love and holiness; or, then others will be brought and encouraged to run in the same blessed course. The more clearly we discern Christ's glory, the more deeply sensible shall we be of our inability to follow him suitably, and at the same time be more desirous of doing it.

Observe the immediate answer given to this prayer; The King has drawn me, has brought me into his chambers. If we observe, as we ought, the returns of prayer, we may find sometimes, while we are yet speaking, Christ hears, Isa. 65. 24. The Bridegroom is a King; the more wonderful his condescension in the invitations and entertainments that he gives us is, the greater reason have we to accept them, and run after him. Those who wait at Wisdom's gates, shall be made to come (so the word is) into her chambers; they shall be led into truth and comfort.

Being brought into the chamber, our griefs vanish. Those, through grace, brought into covenant and communion with God, have reason to go on their way rejoicing, and that joy will enlarge our heart, and be our strength. All our joy shall centre in God; We will rejoice, not in the ointments, or the chambers, but in thee. We have no joy but in Christ, and which we are indebted to him for. The

very remembrance of it, shall be most grateful to us. We will remember to give thanks for thy love, it shall make more durable impressions upon us than any thing in this world.

A gracious soul has communion with all the saints, in this communion with Christ. In the chambers to which we are brought, we not only meet with him, but meet with one another, 1 John 1. 7. Whatever others do, all that are Israelites indeed, and faithful to God, will love Jesus Christ. Whatever differences of apprehension and affection there may be among christians in other things, this they are all agreed in—Jesus Christ is precious to them. Nor is any love acceptable to Christ but the love of the upright, love in sincerity, Eph. 6. 24.

The daughters of Jerusalem, ver. 5, may mean such persons as associate with believers and favour the gospel, professors, not yet established in the faith. The spouse addresses them to prevent their being stumbled by what they saw of her state. She was black as the tents of the wandering Arabs, but comely as the magnificent curtains in the palaces of Solomon. The believer is black as defiled and sinful by nature, but comely as renewed in part, by Divine grace, to the holy image of God. He is still, however, deformed with great remains of sin, but comely as accepted in Christ. His own righteousnesses are as filthy rags, but he is clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. He is often base and contemptible in the esteem of men, but excellent in the sight of God. The visible church also is deformed by the intermixture of hypocrites with believers, and by manifold scandals, divisions, and controversies, which prevail in every part of it. Yet the true believers found among the multitude of professors, form a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

She observed the by-standers look disdainfully upon her, because of her blackness, in respect both of sins and sufferings. She therefore endeavours to remove this offence. The church is sometimes black with persecution, but comely in patience, constancy, and consolation, and never the less amiable in the eyes of Christ. The blackness was owing to the hard usage that she had suffered.

She was sun-burnt, scorched with tribulation and persecution, Matt. 13. 6, 21. She fell under the displeasure of those of her

own house; My mother's children were angry with me; her foes were those of her own house, Matt. 10. 36, brethren by nature, as men; by profession, members of the same sacred body; the children of the church her mother, but not of God her Father; they were angry with her. Note; It is no new thing for the people of God to fall under the anger of their own mother's children. This makes the trouble the more irksome and grievous. They dealt very hardly with her. Keeping the vineyards was base servile work, and very laborious, Isaiah 61. 5; they had compelled her to endure hardships and drudgery, which, among other painful effects, had caused her to neglect in some measure, the care of her soul. The spouse of Christ has met with a great deal of hard usage, but acknowledges that her sufferings are such as she deserved. When God's people are oppressed and persecuted, it becomes them to acknowledge their own sin to be the cause of their troubles, especially carelessness in keeping their vineyards.

Thus, under the emblem of a poor and oppressed female, taken from the toils of the field and made the chosen partner of a prince, we are led to consider the circumstances in which the love of Christ, in its first manifestation, is accustomed to find its objects. They were the wretched slaves of sin, or labouring under the weight of the original curse, Gen. 3. 19, in oppression, in toil, or in sorrow, weary and heavy laden, but how great the change of their circumstances, when the love of Christ is manifested to their souls!—(25.)

5. Some consider that this verse is not wholly spoken by the bride. They divide them thus: the bride says, "I am black," (or dark complexioned.) The virgins reply, "Yet most beautiful." She adds, "O daughters of Jerusalem—as the tents of Kedar." They rejoin, "As the hangings of the pavilion of Solomon."—*Fry.*

The tents of the wild Arabs to this day consist of pieces of dark coloured cloth, woven of goat's or camel's hair; those of eastern princes are exceedingly magnificent. Any female in the east exposed to labour in the field soon becomes very swarthy, and those of high rank value themselves upon the fairness of their complexions.

Ver. 7, 8. *The church beseeches Christ to lead her to the resting place of his people.*

Here is, ver. 7, the humble petition which the spouse presents to her Beloved, the church and every believer to Christ, for more free and intimate communion with him. She turns from the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she had complained both of her sins and of her troubles, and looks up to Heaven for relief and succour

against both. Observe the title she gives to Christ, O thou whom my soul loveth. It is the undoubted character of all true believers, that their souls love Jesus Christ; they love him with all their hearts; and they that do so, may come to him boldly, and may humbly plead it with him. See the option she has of him as the good Shepherd of the sheep. Jesus Christ graciously provides both repast, and repose, for his sheep. Is it with God's people a noon-time of outward troubles, inward conflicts? Christ has rest for them. She requests that she might be admitted into his society; Tell me where thou feedest.

Those whose souls love Jesus Christ, earnestly desire to have communion with him by his word, in which he speaks to us, and by prayer in which we speak to him, and to share in the privileges of his flock. Turning aside from Christ is what gracious souls dread, and deprecate, more than any thing else. Good christians will be afraid of giving any occasion to those about them to question their faith in Christ, and their love to him. We should be earnest with God for a settled peace, in communion with God through Christ.

The Bridegroom gives a gracious answer to this request, ver. 8. See how ready God is to answer prayer, especially prayers for instruction. How affectionately he speaks! Believing souls are fair, in the eyes of the Lord Jesus, above any other. How mildly he checks her for her ignorance, intimating that she might have known it, if it had not been her own fault! But with what tenderness he acquaints her where she might find him! If men say, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, he is there, believe them not, go not after them, Matt. 24. 23; 26. But follow the track, ask for the good old way, observe the footsteps of the flock, and go forth by them. We must bestir ourselves to inquire out the way; and we may find it by looking what has been the practice of godly people all along; let that practice be ours, Heb. 6. 12; 1 Cor. 11. 1. Sit under the direction of good ministers. Feed thyself, and thy kids, beside the tents of the under shepherds: Bring thy charge with thee, they shall all be welcome. Those who would have acquaintance and communion with Christ, must join themselves to his people, and attend to his ministers. Those who have the charge of families, must bring them with them to religious assemblies.

To those who have tasted that the Lord

is gracious, how painful is the apprehension of the loss of his presence, of being employed at a distance from him! But duties call for attention. Much time in this world must be employed in objects which distract the mind from religious meditation. It will therefore be the earnest desire and prayer of the christian, that God would so direct him in his temporal affairs, and in his providence so order his situation, society, and employment, that he may have his Lord and Saviour constantly before his eyes, or have frequent access to his presence. This will be the christian's endeavour in fixing his residence, in choosing his society.—(25.)

Ver. 9—17. *Christ's commendation of the church—Her value for Him.*

Observe the high encomiums which the Bridegroom gives of his spouse. Egypt was noted for beautiful and swift horses, those of Pharaoh's chariots would doubtless be the most excellent of their kind, and in their magnificent trappings would appear to the greatest advantage. In the sight of Christ believers are the excellent of the earth, and fitted to be instruments for promoting his glory. The spiritual gifts and graces which Christ bestows on his church, and every true believer, which render their faith and conversation becoming among men, are described by the ornaments then in use, ver. 10, 11.

The graces of the saints are many, but all orderly disposed; there is a mutual connexion with, and dependence upon each other. Their beauty is not from any thing in themselves, but from the ornaments with which they are set off. Whatever is wanting, shall be made up, till the church and every true believer come to be perfect in beauty. This is here undertaken to be done by the concurring power of the three Persons in the Godhead; We will do it; like that, Gen. 1. 26, Let us make man; so let us make him holy. He who is the Author, will be the Finisher of the good work. While the King sitteth at his table, or meets his people in his ordinances, their precious ointment is most fragrant. That is, the grace received from Christ's fulness springs forth into lively exercises of faith, affection, and gratitude, which are pleasant and honourable to him. Yet Christ, not his gifts, are most precious to them.

There is a complicated sweetness in Christ, and an abundance of it; there is a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire; we are not straitened in him in

whom there is all fulness. The word translated camphire, is *copher*, the same word that signifies atonement or propitiation; Christ is a cluster of merit and righteousness to all believers; therefore he is dear to them, because he is the propitiation for their sins. Observe what a stress is laid upon the application. He is unto me, and again, unto me, all that is sweet; whatever he is to others, he is so to me; he loved me, and gave himself for me; he is my Lord, and my God.

Christ must dwell in the heart, Eph. 3. 17; no pretender must have his place in the soul. He shall not only be laid there for a while, but shall abide there. They resolve to lodge him in their hearts all the night. This may mean the continuance of the darkness and troubles of life.

Christ's church, and every true believer, are amiable in his eyes, ver. 15. He says this, not to make her proud, (humility is one principal ingredient in spiritual beauty,) but to show that there is a real beauty in holiness; that all who are sanctified, are thereby beautified; they are truly fair. And that he takes great delight in the good work which his grace has wrought on the souls of believers. This should comfort weak believers, who are discouraged by their own blackness; let them be told again and again that they are fair. It should engage all who are sanctified, to be very thankful for that grace which has made those fair, who by nature were deformed. One instance of the beauty of the spouse is here mentioned, that she has doves' eyes, a humble modest eye, discovering simplicity and godly sincerity, and a dove-like innocency; eyes enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, that blessed Dove.

The church expresses her estimation of Christ. I am fair no otherwise than as I have thine image stamped upon me; thou art the great original, I am but a faint and imperfect copy. Thou art fair in thyself, and pleasant to all that are thine. Many are fair enough to look at, and yet their temper renders them unpleasant; but thou art fair, yea pleasant. Christ is pleasant, as he is ours, in covenant with us, in relation to us. Christ is always precious to believers, but in a special manner pleasant, when they are admitted into communion with him.

The believer here, ver. 16, speaks with praise of those holy ordinances in which believers have fellowship with Jesus

Christ, and return their pious and devout affections to him. . . They are his institutions, and their privileges; in them Christ and believers meet. The spouse does not call them mine, for a believer will own nothing as his, but what Christ shall have an interest in; nor thine, for all is ours, if we are Christ's. They that can by faith lay claim to Christ, may lay claim to all that is his. These are the best of the kind. Every thing in the covenant of grace is most excellent.

When the redeemed soul feels satisfied of the love of Christ, while she meditates upon all the instances of his great goodness, a sweet persuasion grows that the heavenly Bridegroom is present, and speaks to her in all the promises of his holy word. In these happy moments unusual splendour is cast upon all surrounding objects. Whether the believer, to whom the manifestation is vouchsafed, is standing in the courts of the Lord, or is in retirement; whether following his daily labours, or, if such be the will of God, confined on the bed of sickness, or even in the lonesome dungeon, a sense of the Divine presence will convert the scene into a paradise.—(25.)

Thus the sacred flame is fed, and the soul, daily having fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, flourishes in holiness, and enjoys a lively hope of an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance, in the blessed realms above. Lord, visit our souls more and more with thy salvation.

12. "While the king was in his circuit," this may refer either to his going in procession, to his taking his stand in some part of his retinue, or to his sitting at table.—*Fry.*

14. For camphire some understand heenna, a fragrant shrub, used also for tinging the nails an orange colour.

16. "Verdant is our carpet."—*Williams.* This may refer to the lively vegetation of a lawn, or to the colour of the mattresses or carpets spread upon the part of the room raised above the rest as a seat.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1-7. *The mutual love of Christ and his church.*

Whether Christ, or the church is speaking, ver. 1, is not certain. Many take the words, I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the vallies, to be the words of the church, expressing the excellency of her grace, loveliness, and beauty, which she had from Christ; intimating also her being in the open fields, exposed to many dangers and enemies, and so needing his

protection. The church may be compared to a rose for its beautiful colour and sweet odour, thriving best and most fragrant in sunny places. Thus believers are beautiful as clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and fragrant as adorned with the graces of his Spirit, and, as the rose, they thrive under the refreshing beams of the Sun of righteousness.—(27.)

The church may also be compared to a lily. This is a very noble plant in the east. Its whiteness is singularly excellent, it grows to a considerable height, but has a weak stem. The church, like the lily, is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness of the saints, Rev. 19. 8, like it for fruitfulness under the influence of Divine grace, and though weak in herself, yet is strong in Him that supports her.—(27.)

Or according to others, Christ here speaks and declares his preciousness, and condescending love. Sharon seems to have been noted for beautiful roses, and the rose is deemed superior to all other flowers. Thus Christ, in his person, character, and mediation, combines every excellency. The lily of the valley, or the low places, is an apt emblem of his humiliation in taking our nature, of his dwelling with the poor of this world, and his communing with the poor in spirit in this vale of sin and sorrow; it also indicates his spotless purity.

His church is as a lily compassed with thorns. The wicked, the daughters of this world, such as have no love to Christ, are as thorns, worthless and useless, noxious and hurtful, they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse; they choke good seed, and hinder good fruit, and their end is to be burned. God's people are as lilies among them, torn, shaded, and obscured by them. They are dear to Christ, and yet exposed to hardships and troubles in the world; they must expect it, for they are planted among thorns, but they are nevertheless dear to him. He does not overlook or undervalue any of his lilies for their being among thorns. When they are among thorns, they must still be as lilies, must maintain their purity, and though they are among thorns, must not be turned into thorns, and they shall be still owned as conformable to Christ. Grace in the soul is a lily among thorns, corruptions are thorns in the flesh, 2 Cor. 12. 7; but the lily that is now among thorns, shall shortly be trans-

planted out of this wilderness into that paradise where there is no pricking brier or grieving thorn, Ezek. 28. 24.

The spouse commends her beloved, and prefers him before all others, ver. 3. Name what creature you will, and you will find Christ has the pre-eminence above them all. The world is a barren tree to a soul; Christ is a fruitful one.

In sitting down so near the Lord Jesus, she found a refreshing shade; and so took rest. Christ is to believers as the shadow of a tree, nay, of a great rock in a weary land, Isa. 32. 2; 25. 4. When poor souls are parched with convictions of sin, with the terrors of the law, or the troubles of this world, they find that in Christ, in his name, his graces, his comforts, and his undertaking for poor sinners, which revives them; they that are weary and heavy laden, may find rest in Christ. It is not enough to pass by this shadow, but we must sit down under it; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. We shall find it not like Jonah's gourd, but like the tree of life, the leaves whereof were not only for shelter, but for the healing of the nations. We must sit down under this shadow with delight. This tree also drops its fruits to those who sit down under its shadow, they are welcome to them, and will find them sweet unto their taste. Believers have tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious, 1 Pet. 2. 3, his fruits are all the precious privileges of the new covenant, purchased by his blood, and communicated by his Spirit; promises are sweet to a believer, yea, and precepts too. Pardons are sweet, and peace of conscience sweet. Assurances of God's love, joys of the Holy Ghost, the hopes of eternal life, and the present earnest and foretastes of it are sweet, all sweet to those who have their spiritual senses exercised. If our mouths are out of taste for the pleasures of sin, Divine consolations will be sweet to our taste, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.

We are here admonished with what estimation and partiality the beloved of Christ should look up to him above every other object that can possibly engross the affections. The picture is beautiful, and needs no illustration. It truly represents that preeminence above all other objects, which Christ must have in the sight of those who know his love, and are daily receiving out of his fulness grace for grace.—(25.)

In ver. 4, the image is varied. Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith, as well as the ransom for our sins. He brings the soul to seek and to find comforts through his ordinances, which are as a banqueting house where his saints feast with him. The love of Christ, manifested by his humiliation unto death, and by his word, is the banner he displays, and believers resort to it.

The spouse professes her strong affection to Jesus Christ, ver. 5. David explains this, when he says, Ps. 119. 20, My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto thy judgments; and ver. 81, My soul faints for thy salvation; languishing with care to make it sure, and from fear of coming short of it. The spouse was now absent from her beloved, waiting his return, and cannot bear the grief and distance of delay. O how much better is it with the soul when it is sick from love to Christ, than when surfeited with the love of this world! She desires cordials; O stay me with flagons, or ointments, or flowers, or citrons, any thing that is reviving; comfort me with the fruits of Christ, ver. 3, with the merit and mediation of Christ, and the sense of his love to my soul.

She experiences the power and tenderness of Divine grace, relieving her in her present faintings, ver. 6. Though Christ seemed to have withdrawn, yet he was even then a very present help. David experienced God's hand upholding him when his soul was following hard after God, Ps. 63. 8, and Job in a state of desertion, yet found that God put strength into him, Job 23. 6. All his saints are in his hand, which tenderly holds their aching heads. Believers owe all their strength and comfort to the supporting left hand and embracing right hand of the Lord Jesus.

Finding Christ thus nigh unto her, she is in great care that her communion with him be not interrupted, ver. 7. Jerusalem, the mother of us all, charges all her daughters, the church charges all her members, the believing soul charges all its powers and faculties, by every thing that is amiable in their eyes, and dear to them, not to disturb his gracious visit, intimating that the pleasantest communion with Christ, may easily be disturbed by any improper conduct. We easily grieve the Spirit by our wrong tempers, and others may easily discompose us. Every thing is to be avoided that molests

our devotion, or disturbs the exercise of our faith, and love to Christ. Let those who have comfort, fear sinning it away.

1. Commentators are now generally agreed in ascribing this verse to the bride.—*Williams*. Sharon was a spacious and fertile plain of arable land, extending from Cesarea to Joppa.

"A rose of the field."—*The Greek version, Percy, Fry, and others*.

3. The word translated apple-tree, probably denotes the citron. Apple-trees are very rare in Palestine and Egypt, and the fruit indifferent. The citron is a very beautiful tree, and grows to a considerable size. It perfumes the air, affords a refreshing shade, and its deep green foliage, interspersed with rich golden colour fruit, renders it a very pleasing object. The fragrauncy of the fruit is very admirable; it is exhilarating, while the juice is refreshing.

7. Or, the gazels and deer are mentioned in allusion to their wildness. That the attendants should be as cautious not to disturb the Beloved as they would be in approaching those timid animals.

Ver. 8—13. *The hope and the calling of the church.*

The church here pleases herself with the thoughts of further communion with Christ. Like one of his own sheep, she knows his voice before she sees him, and can easily distinguish it from the voice of a stranger, John 10. 4, 5. It is the voice of my Beloved, it can be the voice of no other, for none besides can speak to the heart. She sees him come. This may very well be applied to the prospect which the old testament saints had of Christ's coming in the flesh. Abraham saw his day at a distance, and was glad. The nearer the time came, the clearer discoveries were made of it; and they that waited for the consolation of Israel with faith, saw him come, and triumphed in the sight. He comes cheerfully, and with great alacrity, ver. 9, as one pleased with his own undertaking, and that had his heart upon it, and his delights with the sons of men. When he came to be baptized with the baptism of blood, how was he straitened till it was accomplished! Luke 12. 50. He comes, slighting and surmounting all difficulties, making nothing of the discouragements he was to break through. The curse of the law, the death of the cross, must be undergone, all the powers of darkness must be grappled with, but before the resolutions of his love, these great mountains become plains. Whatever opposition is given at any time to the deliverance of God's church, Christ will break through it. He comes speedily. When he comes for the deliverance of his people, he never stays beyond his time, which is the best time. Believers

find that even when Christ has withdrawn sensible comforts, and seems to forsake, yet it is but for a small moment, and he will soon return with everlasting loving-kindnesses.

The saints of old saw him looking through the ceremonial institutions. In their sacrifices and purifications Christ discovered himself to them, and gave them intimations and earnest of his grace, both to engage and to encourage their longing for his coming. Such is our present state in comparison with what it will be at Christ's second coming; we now see him through a glass darkly, the body is a wall between us and him, we now and then get a sight of him, but not face to face, as we hope to see him shortly. In the sacraments Christ is near us, but it is behind the wall of external signs, through those lattices he manifests himself to us; but we shall shortly see him as he is. Some understand this of the state of a believer when he is under a cloud. Christ is out of sight. It is sin, and nothing else, that separates between us and God, and that is a wall of our own erecting, Isa. 59. 2; behind that he stands, as waiting to be gracious, and ready to be reconciled. He looks in, observing the frame of our hearts and the working of our souls. His eye is upon us, every glimpse we have of him by faith is to render us willing to be absent from the body, that we may be present with the Lord.

This poetical and most beautiful description of spring, ver. 10—13, in which the church speaks of Christ as inviting her to walk abroad with him, may be variously applied. It may refer to the doing away of the dark and discouraging dispensation of Moses, for that of Christ, but it seems more plainly to mean the sinner's conversion. Christ invites the new convert to arise from sloth and despondency, to leave sin and worldly vanities, for union and communion with him. The winter may mean years passed in ignorance and sin, unfruitful and miserable, or the season of storms and tempests that accompanied his conviction of guilt and danger. The flowers, and singing of birds may denote the opening blossoms of holy affections, and the first grateful songs of praise. The voice of the turtle may signify the first comforts of the Holy Spirit. The green figs and tender grapes represent the first fruits of righteousness, which though yet imperfect and imma-

ture, promise a valuable increase. Even the unripe fruits of holiness are pleasant unto him whose grace has produced them. All these encouraging tokens and evidences of Divine favour, are urged as motives to the soul to follow Christ more entirely. This may also refer to the renewed comforts of the believer, after a season of backsliding, temptation, and discouragement—to the renewed peace of the church after sore persecutions, and to the completion of our happiness in heaven.

Arise then, and improve this spring-time; come away from the world and the flesh, come into fellowship with Christ, 1 Cor. 1. 9. Walk in the light of the Lord. This blessed change is owing purely to the approaches and influences of the Sun of righteousness, who calls to us from heaven; arise therefore, poor drooping soul, and come away with thy Beloved. Arise, and shake thyself from the dust, Isa. 52. 2. Arise, shine, for thy light is come, Isa. 60. 1; walk in that light, Isa. 2. 5. And look for the resurrection of the body at the last day, and the glory to be revealed. That will be an eternal farewell to winter, and a joyful entrance upon an everlasting spring.

9. The word translated wall is supposed by *Harner* to mean the wall or enclosure of a chiosk or eastern arbour, a large room usually built in the midst of a garden, inclosed with lattices, round which vines, jessamines, and other similar plants climb.

Ver. 14—17. *Christ's care of the church. Her faith and hope.*

Here is the encouraging invitation which Christ gives to the church, and to every believing soul, to come into communion with him, ver. 14. She is Christ's dove, for he owns her, and delights in her; she can find no rest but in him and his ark, and therefore to him, as her Noah, she returns. Christ is the Rock, to whom she flies for shelter, and in whom alone she can think herself safe, and find herself easy, as a dove in the hole of a rock, when struck at by the birds of prey, Jer. 48. 28. Or she crept into the secret places, for fear and shame; being heartless and discouraged, and shunning even the sight of her Beloved; being conscious to herself of her own unfitness and unworthiness to come into his presence, and speak to him, she drew back; and was like a silly dove without heart, Hos. 7. 11. Christ graciously calls her out of her retirements; she was mourning for her iniquities, and refusing to be comforted. But

Christ calls her to lift up her face without spot, being purged from an evil conscience, to come boldly to the throne of grace, having a great High Priest there, Heb. 4. 16, to tell what her petition is, and what her request; Let me hear thy voice, what would ye that I should do unto you? Speak freely, and fear not a slight or repulse. For her encouragement, he tells her the good thoughts he had of her; thy praying voice is music in God's ears. This does not commend our services, but God's gracious condescension in making the best of them, and the efficacy of the much incense which is offered with the prayers of saints, Rev. 8. 3. The voice of prayer is sweet and acceptable to God, when the countenance, the conversation in which we show ourselves before men, is holy, comely, and agreeable to our profession; those who are sanctified, have the best comeliness.

The new convert is as a vine with tender grapes. The foxes injure such vines. Christ therefore represents that great care should be taken to remove whatever may injure the believer's fruitfulness in good works. The first risings of sinful thoughts and desires—the beginnings of trifling pursuits which only waste the time—trifling visits which intrude upon the hours that should be employed in meditation and prayer—small and plausible departures from truth—whatever would admit of some measure of conformity to the world—all these and many more, are little foxes which must be removed out of the way. This charge to take the foxes, is a charge to particular believers to mortify their own corruptions, their sinful appetites and passions, which are as foxes, little foxes, that destroy their graces and comforts, crush good beginnings, and prevent their coming to perfection. Seize the little foxes, the first risings of sin, the little ones of Babylon, Ps. 137. 9, those sins that seem little, for they often prove very dangerous. Whatever we find a hindrance to us in that which is good, we must put away. It is also a charge to all in their places to oppose and prevent the spreading of opinions and practices which corrupt men's judgments, perplex their minds, and discourage virtue and piety. Persecutors are foxes, Luke 13. 32, false prophets are foxes, Ezek. 13. 4.

The church speaks, ver. 16, 17, as assured that Christ and all his blessings are become hers by faith. Of this, her love to

him, and unreserved surrender to be his, are sure evidence. She rejoice that she knows by experience that he takes pleasure in visiting and communing with his people who seek to resemble him in lowliness and purity.

She begs that he will continue to favour her with those visits till the day break, and the shadows flee away. This may refer to the shadows of the Jewish dispensation, which were dispelled by the dawning of the gospel day, and the rising of the Sun of righteousness. Or it may point to the darkness and shadows of our state on earth, which will be exchanged for heavenly light and lasting happiness. The day of comfort will come after a night of desertion. Or it may refer to the second coming of Christ, and the eternal happiness of the saints; the shadows of our present state will flee away, darkness and doubts, griefs and all grievances, and a glorious day shall dawn, a morning when the upright shall have dominion, a day that shall have no night.

The church begs the presence of her Beloved, in the mean time, to support and comfort her. In the day of my extremity, make haste to help me, make no long tarrying. Come over the mountains of Bether, "the mountains of division," interposing time and days, with gracious anticipations of that day of light and love.

Let us then watch against the first beginnings and occasions of evil. Carefulness and watchfulness will conduce greatly to our assurance of hope. Christ will delight in us as the lilies that he hath planted; we shall be supported with his gracious visits, and wait in humble, patient hope, till these earthly shadows flee away, and he come over every separating mountain to take us home to himself.

15. The animals here referred to are a species of jackal: see note Jud. 15. 4.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1—5. *The trials of the church by the withdrawing of Christ, and her recovery of his favour.*

It was hard to the old testament church to find Christ in the ceremonial law; long was the Consolation of Israel looked for before it came; the watchmen of that church gave little assistance to those who inquired after him. This also is applicable to the case of particular believers, who often walk in darkness a great while, but they that seek Christ to the end, shall find him at length. It accords either with the

sinner in seeking the comfort of salvation by Christ; or the after experience of believers when their joys have declined.

The night is a time of coldness, darkness, and drowsiness, and of dim apprehensions concerning spiritual things. Believers, especially when at ease, are apt to relapse into supineness. At first, when uneasy, some feeble efforts are made to obtain the comfort of communion with Christ, but only as if a person should pretend to seek another without exerting himself to do so. This proves in vain; the believer is then roused to increased diligence. We must evidence the sincerity of our love to Christ by our inquiries after him. The streets and broadways seem to imply the means of grace in which the Lord is to be sought, with fervency of mind. Still, for a time, the search is unsuccessful. Application is then made to those who watch for men's souls, the ministers of religion. Those only who have seen Christ themselves, are likely to direct others to a sight of him. Immediate satisfaction is not found, but afterwards it is. Neither the society of brethren, nor of the church, nor of ministers, can comfort the afflicted conscience, unless Christ himself be apprehended by faith. We must not rest in any means, but by faith apply immediately to Christ. When the Beloved is found, he must be held and not let go, lest the comfort of his presence be lost.

The holding of Christ and not letting him go, denotes an earnest cleaving to him, and not consenting upon any terms to quit him. This presence of Christ being spiritual, it cannot be the force of a frail creature that prevails, but as Jacob, Hos. 12. 2, 3; it is a humble ardent suing by prayer, with a lively exercise of faith on his promises, which engages him to stay. He is tied by his own love, and his faithfulness in his promises, more than if he were overcome by their strength, as a little weeping child will hold its mother or nurse, because pity so constrains them that they cannot leave it. He cannot go, because he will not. So long as a believer's faith keeps hold of him, he will not be offended at their importunity, yea, he is well pleased with it. See here the wonderful condescension of the Almighty, to be held by his own creature.—(20.)

The believer desires to make others acquainted with his Saviour. Wherever we find Christ, we must take him home with

us to our houses, especially to our hearts. The church is our mother, and we should be earnest in prayer for Christ's presence with his people and ministers always. The charge before given, ch. 2, 7, is repeated, to be very observant of him, careful to please him, and afraid of offending him. The charge given to the church in the wilderness concerning the Angel of the covenant, who was among them, explains this, *Exod. 23, 21*; Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not. Our faith ought to be declared by an open confession, and we should call upon ourselves and each other, to beware of grieving our holy Comforter, and provoking the departure of the beloved.

Ver. 6. *The excellencies of the church.*

The daughters of Jerusalem inquire, Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness? A wilderness is an emblem of the world; the believer comes out of it when he renounces its friendship, is delivered from the love of its sinful pleasures and pursuits, and refuses compliance with its customs and fashions, to seek happiness in communion with the Saviour.

This may be applied to public deliverances of the church of God, but it is especially applicable to the recovery of a gracious soul out of a state of desertion and despondency. She ascends out of the dry and barren land, where there is no water. A poor soul may long be left to wander, but shall come up, at last, under the conduct of the Comforter. Like pillars of smoke, like a cloud of incense ascending from the altar, or the smoke of the burnt-offerings. This signifies pious and devout affections, and the mounting of the soul heaven-ward. Christ's return to the soul gives life to its devotion; and its communion with God is most reviving, when it ascends out of a wilderness. The believer is perfumed with myrrh and frankincense; is replenished with the graces of God's Spirit, which are as sweet spices, or as the holy incense; his devotions now are peculiarly lively. These graces and comforts are called the powers of the merchant; they are far-fetched, and dear bought, by our Lord Jesus, at vast expense, no less than his own blood. They are not the products of our own soil, nor the growth of our own country; they are from the heavenly Canaan.

Ver. 7—11. *The care of Christ for the church.*

To relieve the tiresome way through which the bride must pass, and to defend

her in the darkness of the night, king Solomon, it seems, had sent a magnificent palanquin, attended by valiant soldiers. The equipage is recognised, and the beholders perceive whom it conveys. So He, who is the peace of his people, the King of the heavenly Zion, has carefully provided for the safe conveyance of his redeemed through the wilderness of this world, to the mansions prepared for them in his Father's house. The angel of the Lord encampeth round them that fear him, and delivereth them.—(25.)

We come next to the description of the vehicle itself, ver. 9, 10. It was contrived for rest and easy conveyance, but its beauty and magnificence showed the quality of its owner. The comfort and relief of the believer during the toilsome and perilous journey of life, have been graciously provided for by their all-wise and all-powerful Saviour. Relying upon his promise, and thus placed above the cares and troubles of life, and secure from harm, the believer while passing through this world to a better world above, fully answers to the emblem before us.—(25.)

The church is well guarded; more are with her than are against her; lest any hurt this vineyard, God himself keeps it night and day, *Isa. 27, 2, 3*; particular believers, when they repose themselves in Christ, and with him, though it may be night-time with them, and they may have their fears in the night, are yet safe. The angels have a charge concerning them, ministers are appointed to watch for their souls, holding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and having that always ready for the silencing of the fears of God's people in the night. All the attributes of God are engaged for the safety of believers. Our danger is from the rulers of the darkness of this world, but we are safe in the armour of light.

The chariot denotes the covenant of redemption, the way of our salvation, as it is contrived in the eternal counsel of God, and manifested to us in the scriptures. This is that work of Christ himself, wherein the glory of his grace and love to sinners most eminently appears, and which makes him amiable and admirable in the eyes of believers. In this covenant they are carried in the perfection of Divine love, and, as it were, ride in triumph. It is admirably framed and contrived, both for the glory of Christ, and for the comfort of believers; it is well

ordered in all things, and sure, 2 Sam. 23. 5; it has pillars that will not shrink or bow; it is made of the wood of Lebanon, which can never rot; the base of it is gold, the most lasting metal; the blood of the covenant, that rich purple, is the cover of this chariot, by which believers are sheltered from the wind and storms of Divine wrath, and the troubles of this world; but the midst of it, and that which is all in all in it, is love, that love of Christ which passes knowledge, the dimensions of which are immeasurable, this is for believers to repose upon.—(30.)

Observe, ver. 11, the call given to the daughters of Zion, to acquaint themselves with the glories of king Solomon. Christ, in his gospel, manifests himself. Solomon is here the type of Christ, the King of Israel, and the Prince of peace. Behold him then; look with pleasure upon Christ in his glory; look upon him with faith, with a fixed eye; behold, and admire him, behold, and love him. Go forth and behold him, go off from the world, as those who see no beauty and excellency in it, in comparison with what is to be seen in the Lord Jesus. Go out of yourselves, and let the sight of his transcendent beauty put you out of conceit with yourselves. Go forth to the place where he is to be seen.

The direction given them is to take special notice of his crown. Applying this to Christ, it speaks the honour put upon him, and his power and dominion. Go forth and see King Jesus, with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him, when he declared him his beloved Son, and invested him with a sovereign authority, both in heaven and in earth, and put all things under his feet. It seems especially to mean the honour done him by his church, add by all true believers, in whose hearts he is formed, and of whom he has said, These are my mother, and sister, and brother, Matt. 12. 50. They give him the glory of his undertaking; to him is glory in the church, Eph. 3. 21.

There is a gradation here to be observed; ver. 7, it is Solomon; ver. 9, king Solomon; ver. 11, king Solomon crowned. The longer the believer speaks of Christ, and dwells upon his excellency, his thoughts draw the deeper, and set him up the higher; becoming warmer in apprehensions, affections, and expressions concerning him. Acquaintance with Christ makes us speak eloquently of him.—(30.)

Blessed be God, sinners may be assured that every one who seeketh findeth. The Lord Jesus Christ rejoices over the poor sinner who comes to sue for his mercy. Nor did Solomon appear so glorious when arrayed in royal majesty, as the Redeemer when converted sinners are joined to him. This is his crown, which he wears, which he most values. Poor, dejected, trembling sinner, go forth and behold him. See how he is glorified; how he rejoices in saving the meanest and the vilest that come unto him, and be encouraged to hope he will be glorious in saving thee also.

10. The royal palanquin, a litter or vehicle borne upon men's shoulders, is seen coming up from the wilderness, the air rendered fragrant with rich perfumes burnt profusely, as usual at eastern marriages upon grand occasions. These carriages are of general use in the east, and are frequently ornamented with much magnificence. The inside is often painted in a very beautiful manner, or the lining worked with appropriate emblematic devices and mottoes; such may be the lining here described. See *Harmer and Willm.*

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1-7 *Christ setteth forth the graces of the church.*

We may understand either individual believers, or the church collectively, as here addressed by Christ. We may not be able to explain the several allusions satisfactorily, but Christ appears to show that the church and the believer partake of every kind of spiritual excellency.

Those who honour Christ, he will honour, 1 Sam. 2. 30. He does not flatter the believer, nor design thereby to make the church proud of herself, but it is to encourage her under her present dejections. Whatever others thought of her, she was amiable in his eyes. It is also to invite others to think well of her too, and to join themselves to the church.

If these comparisons, besides being illustrations of female beauty in the language of the times when these Divine songs were composed, were designed, each to have a mystic import and meaning applicable to the graces of the church, or of the faithful christian, we must acknowledge that they are lost; and great discredit has been done to the Canticles by vague and fanciful guesses, in attempts to spiritualize all these similitudes.—(25.)

The mountain of myrrh, ver. 6, appears to mean the mountain Moriah, on which the temple was built, where the incense was burnt, and the people worshipped the Lord. This was his peculiar residence till the shadows of the legal dispensation

were dispersed by the breaking of the gospel day, and the rising of the Sun of righteousness. At present he dwells in human nature, and is gone into the true holy place, to present the worship of his people before the throne, with the incense of his intercession. But though, in respect of his human nature, he is absent from his church on earth, and will continue to be so till the heavenly day break, yet he is spiritually present in his ordinances, and with his people, as he declared, Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world.

He had said, ver. 1, Thou art fair; but here he goes further, and, in review of the particulars, as of those of the creation, he pronounces all very good. All things are become new, 2 Cor. 5. 17. There is not only a new face and a new name, but a new nature; there is no spot in thee, as far as thou art renewed. The spiritual sacrifices must be without blemish. The church, when Christ shall present it to himself a glorious church, will be altogether without spot or wrinkle, Eph. 5. 27.

How fair and comely are believers when justified in Christ's righteousness, and adorned with spiritual graces!—when their conversation in thought, word, and deed, though imperfect, is orderly and pure, manifesting a heart nourished in the pastures of the gospel! When by faith and meditation they improve their spiritual provision, and their zeal for God is uniform, pure, and moderate, animating them to fruitfulness in good works. When their prayers and converse are profitable and pleasant, discovering the soundness of their hearts, animated by, and accepted through the blood of Christ. When there is secret blushing on account of remaining defects, when their faith which unites them to Christ furnishes them with the whole armour of God for their defence from spiritual enemies, as the worthies of God formerly experienced. And when feeding upon the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, the word in the Old and the New Testament, they abound in faith and love towards Christ, and in care to instruct and edify others.—(10.)

1—5. Believers have an inner man as well as an outward, which hath, as it were, distinct parts and members which act with reference thereto, with some analogy to the members in the natural body, signifying distinct graces of faith, love, &c., which are parts of that new nature. And although curiosity cannot be satisfied in the particular application, yet there is a particular meaning of every part; there are no idle words or

vain repetitions. We should therefore beware of thinking all this needless, seeing God knoweth best what is needful.—*Durham.*

The scriptures have perhaps suffered more from the determination of commentators to explain all difficulties that occur therein than from any other cause whatever.—*Williams.*

Ver. 8—15. *Christ's love to the church.*

Observe the gracious call Christ gives the church to come with him. It is,

1. A precept; Rise up, and come away. All that are by faith come to Christ, must come with Christ, in holy obedience to him; and so this is Christ's call to his spouse to come off from the world, all its products, all its pleasures; all those must do so, that would come with Christ. These hills are pleasant, but there are in them lions' dens; they are mountains of the leopards, mountains of prey, though they seem glorious and excellent, Ps. 76. 4. Satan, that roaring lion, is the prince of this world, in the things of it he lies in wait to devour.

2. It may be taken as a promise; Thou shalt come with me from Lebanon, from the lions' dens; that is, many shall be brought home to me, as living members of the church, from every point. The church shall be delivered from her persecutors, in due time: though now she dwells among lions, Ps. 57. 4.

No expressions can be stronger than these, in which Christ manifests his affection to his church; and yet that great proof of his love, his dying for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, goes far beyond them all. Such a price being given for her, a high value must needs be put upon her accordingly; and may well make us wonder at the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that love in which he gave himself for us, and gives himself to us. Observe, Christ's heart is upon his church, ver. 9; so it has appeared all along; his pleasure is therein, it is his peculiar treasure.

He delights in the affection she has for him; How fair is thy love! how beautiful is it! Not only thy love itself, but all the fruits and products of it, its working in the heart, its works in the life. How well does it become a believer thus to love Christ, and what pleasure does Christ take in it!

The ointments, the odours wherewith she is perfumed, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, her good works, are an odour of a sweet smell, Phil. 4. 18. Love and

obedience to God are more pleasing to Christ than sacrifice or incense. The odour of her garments too, the visible profession she makes of religion, and relation to Christ, before men, and wherein she appears to the world, this is very grateful to Christ, as the smell of Lebanon. Christ having put upon his spouse the white raiment of his own righteousness, Rev. 3. 18, and the righteousness of saints, Rev. 19. 8, and this perfumed with holy joy and comfort, he is well pleased with it.

Her words, both in her devotions to God, and her discourses with men, ver. 11, drop that which is very sweet, and drop it freely and plentifully. If what God speaks to us, be sweeter to us than the honey and the honey-comb, Ps. 19. 10, what we say to him in prayer and praise, shall also be pleasing to him.

Christ delights in believers as in a pleasant garden. This comparison is pursued, ver. 12—14. The church is fitly compared to a garden, to a garden which, as usual, had a fountain in it. It is a garden enclosed, it is appropriated to God, he has set it apart for himself. Israel is God's portion, the lot of his inheritance. It is enclosed for secrecy; the saints are God's hidden ones, therefore the world knows them not; Christ walks in his garden unseen. It is enclosed for safety; a hedge of protection is made about it, which all the powers of darkness cannot break through. The souls of believers are as gardens enclosed; grace in them is as a spring shut up, where the water that Christ gives, is a well of living water, John 4. 14; 7. 38—the fertilizing influences of the Holy Spirit. The world knoweth not these wells of salvation, nor can any opposer corrupt this fountain. Its effects men may perceive, the cause they cannot discover.

Here are great plenty of fruits, and great variety, nothing wanting which could either beautify, or enrich this garden, could make it more delightful or serviceable to its great Lord. Saints in the church, and graces in the saints, are very fitly compared to these fruits and spices. They are planted, and do not grow of themselves; the trees of righteousness are the planting of the Lord, Isa. 61. 3, grace springs from an incorruptible seed. They are precious, they are plants of renown. They are pleasant, and of a sweet savour to God and man, and diffuse their fragrance. They are

the blessings of this earth. They are permanent, and will be preserved to good purpose when flowers are withered. Grace, reduced into glory, will last for ever. Christ is the source which makes these gardens fruitful; even a well of living waters from whom all heavenly graces flow, as streams from the declivities of Lebanon, to water every part of his church.

8. The beloved promises his bride one day to take her with him to his distant abode in the mountain of myrrh or Jerusalem. From the names of the other mountains, it would appear that the supposed residence of the espoused was beyond the north or north-east borders of the land of Canaan. From the emblems here mentioned, she would have the prospect of the land of promise. Lebanon and these mountains formed in fact the border which would be most frequently passed by the Israelites in going to and returning from foreign countries. When we consider the general language of scripture, and that every thing relating to this extraordinary people, and their habitation in the land of Canaan, is used to typify the concerns of Christ's church and kingdom, it seems natural that the passing of this boundary, and looking from the tops of these mountains, should be considered as emblematical of the true Israelites, of all followers of Christ, entering into that rest which remaineth for the people of God.—Fry.

Ver. 16. *The church desires further influences of Divine grace.*

The church implores the influences of the blessed Spirit to make this garden fragrant and fruitful, ver. 16. This is a prayer for the church in general, that there may be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon it, in order to its flourishing estate. Sanctified souls are as gardens, gardens of the Lord, enclosed for him. Graces in the soul are as spices in these gardens, that in them which is valuable and useful. The blessed Spirit, in his operations upon the soul, is as the north and the south wind, which blows where it listeth, John 3. 8. There is the north-wind of convictions, and the south-wind of comforts; but all, like the wind, brought out of God's treasures, and fulfilling his word. The flowing forth of the spices of grace depends upon the gales of the Spirit; he stirs up good affections, and works in us both to will and to do that which is good; it is he that makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by us. We ought therefore to wait upon the Spirit of grace for his quickening influences, to pray for them, and to lay our souls under them. God has promised to give us his Spirit, but he will for this be inquired of.

The church invites Christ. Let my Beloved then come into his garden, and

om Henry and Scott.

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